

Strengthening Shared Governance at GW: Critical Steps Forward VERSION 2.0 (Rev: August 28, 2021)

Introduction

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities (AGB) Board of Directorsⁱ affirm their joint commitment to shared governance. For shared governance to work, the three components (i.e., trustees, the administration, and the facultyⁱⁱ) need a solid understanding of shared governance, its current practice and codification, and its history at that specific institution. This document offersⁱⁱⁱ a starting point to advance the discussion of what “shared governance” means and how to strengthen it at GW. The Faculty Senate aims to work with the administration and the trustees to reach a mutual understanding of shared governance in order to implement it more effectively at GW. While shared governance also applies to how various schools are managed, this document focuses on university-wide issues that impact more than one school at GW. The current document (Version 2.0) builds upon the previous efforts of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC), initiated in September 2020, to operationalize shared governance at GW^{iv}. Please refer to Appendix A for relevant extracts from GW governance documents.

What is Shared Governance?

Shared governance refers to the process whereby faculty, administration, and trustees work together to make informed decisions for the university. Its most fundamental description, referred to as the [Statement on Governments of Colleges and Universities](#), was adopted in 1966 by the American Council of Education (ACE), the AGB, and the AAUP. Scott (2020)^v explains,

This statement of principles was built on a long history of efforts to define the roles of trustees in overall fiduciary responsibility for a campus or system; the president's role as the executive responsible for fulfilling the mission in a legally, ethically, and financially sound manner; and the faculty's role in setting academic standards and admission requirements, establishing the curricula, hiring and nurturing faculty, maintaining institutional and programmatic accreditation, and participating in strategic planning, setting priorities, and searches for senior administrators.

In describing shared governance, the [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#) underscores the following (emphasis added in light of recent experiences):

- I. Shared governance recognizes **interdependencies** of its various components (i.e., trustees, administration, and the faculty): Because of the different roles, while the final responsibility for any given decision may rest with one component, the other components will be directly affected. It is therefore important to involve all components in major decisions. A culture of genuine consultation realizes early, careful, and meaningful faculty participation in institutional planning.^{vi} Hence, it can help strengthen mutual respect for distinct roles as well as emphasizes interdependencies.
 - a. This interdependence should not be confounded with the **independence** of each component. They should speak freely. For example, the [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#) states that shared governance must ensure that faculty input is independent and represents faculty expertise.
- II. Shared governance **encourages transparency** and **frequent communication**.
- III. **Mutual trust** helps establish a strong foundation of shared governance.

Some Recent Examples from GW

Successful Shared Governance (Modifying the Faculty Code: 2018-2019): Former Provost Maltzman worked collaboratively with the Senate to modify the Faculty Code. The Senate standing committee on Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom (PEAF) independently proposed resolutions, reviewed the proposals presented by the administration, and generated new proposals while also working with the Senate, Provost Maltzman, and all PEAF members to create an inclusive process. Provost Maltzman's approach was not simply to listen to faculty concerns and do what he thought best but to negotiate language that everyone was comfortable with. He did not merely invite input but sought consensus. This was an iterative process involving many members and meetings, which continually narrowed differences to arrive at acceptable revisions to the administration and faculty.

Failed Shared Governance (Restructuring Research Administration: 2020): A few years ago, a joint task force of faculty, staff, and trustees reformed the research administration. The results were generally praised. However, in 2020 the administration decided to introduce research “pods” with minimal faculty involvement. While a few faculty members were added to the already assembled Shared Services Committee, the decision to introduce the pod model was taken against their advice as well as against the advice of most Deans. The Associate Deans for Research were not even consulted. The faculty on the committee pointed out the pitfalls of the proposed pod system, which proved sadly prophetic. Unfortunately, the results have been disappointing in terms of pod performance and demoralizing for both faculty and staff.

Suggestions

It is clear from the above principles that shared governance requires dedicated commitment from all components. Hence, to strengthen the foundation of shared governance at GW, we offer the following suggestions:

- **Jointly establish clear and frequent communication channels between the faculty, administration, and trustees:** The means of communication among the faculty, administration, and governing board may 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.^{vii} Whatever the communication channels, they should be diverse, formal and informal, with enough duplication so that major decisions should not surprise faculty, administration, or trustees.

Why: Shared governance refers to the process whereby faculty, administration, and trustees work together to make informed decisions for the university. For this to happen, mechanisms for healthy and direct communication between various components should be established. This is necessary for building trust and seeking faculty input. Clear and frequent communication channels also ensure productive exchange of ideas, perspectives, and concerns and provide complete and timely access to relevant data (enrollment numbers and aggregated and disaggregated financial data).

How: To establish stronger, direct, and frequent communication with faculty, the following mechanisms should be initiated at each level:

- Encourage frequent trustee attendance at Faculty Senate and FSEC meetings and increase faculty attendance and participation in trustee meetings.
- Faculty members should have a role in introducing and explaining shared governance during

- the new trustee orientation.
- In general, only individuals nominated and elected by the faculty represent the faculty view. In many cases, this refers to the Faculty Senate and/or its standing committees. In other cases, such as during the summer or emergencies, that might mean the FSEC. However, we expect that more critical decisions will demand broader faculty input, which should be ensured by a) working closely with FSEC and Senate members to seek additional representation and b) linking committees and task forces to existing Senate committees so they can work together in an integrated manner. It is important to mention that shared governance requires that the faculty should select faculty representatives according to procedures determined by the faculty^{viii}.
 - Secrecy and confidentiality breed distrust. Since shared governance also requires robust, direct communication among the faculty, faculty representatives must provide informed feedback to the entire faculty. Hence, they should not (in general) be sworn to secrecy nor bound by confidentiality. The [AAUP Report on Confidentiality and Faculty Representation in Academic Governance](#) (2013) states that “requiring faculty members to sign confidentiality agreements as a requirement to serve on university committees is in most cases inconsistent with widely accepted standards of shared governance and with the concept of serving as a representative.”
- **Establish joint effort in the internal operation of the university:** The variety and complexity of the tasks in higher education institutions produce an inescapable interdependence among trustees, administration, and faculty. Therefore, adequate communication among these components and full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort is required.^{ix}

Why: Joint effort reflects respect for localized knowledge and recognizes the vital role each component plays in the effective operation of the university. For example, the expertise of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences, the Milken Institute School of Public Health, and the School of Nursing were important in our responses to the pandemic. The diversity of faculty expertise in various fields (such as education, business, engineering, etc.) is a tremendous asset for the university.

How: There are several important areas which demand consultation and exploration of different viewpoints. For example:

- **Selecting the President:** The selection of a president “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.”^x
- **Faculty consultation in senior administration hiring:** The recent controversy involving the hire of a new VP of Communication has led to the realization that senior administrators can have a dramatic effect on students, faculty, staff, and trustees. This resulted in an agreement that the faculty will play a more significant role in hiring senior administrators.
- **Budgeting:** The allocation of resources among competing demands is central to the governing board's formal responsibility, the administrative authority, and the faculty's educational and research functions. Hence, each component should have a voice in the determination of short-term and long-term priorities. From the faculty’s perspective, this requires sharing of perspectives and agreement with the trustees and administration on how

fiscal resources are allocated to support the mission of teaching (salaries, increases, and new hires; technology to support that mission; scholarship and the like to recruit a diverse student body; etc.) and research (support for grant-seeking efforts, new research agendas, young research faculty, Ph.D. student support, etc.). As a result, faculty should receive appropriate analyses of past budgetary experience, reports on current budgets and expenditures, and short- and long-range fiscal projections. Without timely access to such information, faculty, trustees, and administration cannot engage in productive discussions regarding budget planning. The AAUP's statement on [The Role of the Faculty in Budgetary and Salary Matters](#) (1990) states, "The soundness of resulting decisions should be enhanced if an elected representative committee of the faculty participates in deciding on the overall allocation of institutional resources and the proportion to be devoted directly to the academic program" and that such a committee will be of "critical importance in representing faculty interests and interpreting the needs of the faculty to the governing board and president." Further, it suggests that "imposing a blanket requirement of confidentiality on committees that advise the administration on budgetary matters is inconsistent with this basic AAUP-recommended governance standard."

- **Strategic planning:** Strategic planning should begin with the University's mission statement. Budgetary considerations are essential for the financial health of the University, but they should be considered within the context of the institution's larger academic mission. Both long-range and short-range planning should involve all three components of the university: faculty, administration, and trustees. Further, as recommended by the [Statement on Colleges and Universities](#), "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. A distinction should be observed between the institutional system of communication and the system of responsibility for making decisions."
- **Internal Restructuring:** The research and teaching role of the faculty is central to GW's mission. Accordingly, efforts to modify administrative support for research or teaching, such as for grant administration and IT, should require the clear approval of the faculty.
- **Operations:** Routine administrative responsibilities need to be clearly stated. Also, all operational decision-making should be subject to a periodic review by all components.
- **Physical resources:** Decisions regarding existing or prospective physical resources are critical for the smooth operation of the university. Hence, faculty should be briefed adequately. They should also be able to provide input on decisions regarding existing and prospective physical resources on campus while the administration's plans are still in the formative stage.
- **Review of the Faculty Code and Faculty Organizational Plan (FOP):** Some of the above suggestions will work best if considered in concert with efforts to fulfill or modify the Faculty Code and FOP. Therefore, we suggest a joint faculty-trustee task force be formed to undertake this critical task. For example, the definition of a quorum for the Faculty Assembly and the role and representation of non-tenure-track faculty should be discussed (refer to Appendix A). Some extracts particularly relevant to shared governance from the Faculty Code and FOP are attached as Appendix A.

Conclusions

We recognize that various factors (including institutional size, mission, history, and external environment) impact how the governance standards apply in specific situations. In this document, we have provided a few examples and outlined initial concrete steps to strengthen a culture of shared governance at GW. Current campus circumstances represent an opportunity and urgency to address these issues and rebuild trust. We look forward to working with the trustees and administration in encouraging transparency and frequent communication among the different components to ensure the long-term success of our shared academic mission. We hope that the ideas expressed in this document “will lead to the correction of existing weaknesses and assist in establishing sound structures and procedures.”^{xi}

For questions and comments, please contact us directly.

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Appendix A

Strengthening Shared Governance at GW

Following are some key extracts from several GW documents that contain essential information regarding shared governance.

The Charter of the George Washington University:

Purposes

Section 2

The purposes of the University are —

1. to educate individuals in liberal arts, languages, sciences, learned professions, and other courses and subjects of study,
2. to conduct scholarly research and publish the findings of such research,
3. to operate hospital and medical facilities, and
4. to engage in any activity incidental to the foregoing purposes. Such purposes shall be accomplished without regard to the race, color, creed, sex, or national origin of any individual.

Authority of the Board of Trustees

Section 5

- a. The board shall be responsible for the exercise of all powers and the discharge of all duties of the University in a manner consistent with this Act, shall have full authority over all personnel and activities of the University, and may appoint or elect any person to serve as an officer, professor, lecturer, teacher, tutor, agent, or employee of the University. Any person so appointed or elected may be removed by the board.
- b. The board may, by a vote of two-thirds of the individuals then serving as members of the board, adopt, amend, or repeal any bylaw of the University for—
 1. the conduct of the purposes, business, and affairs of the University,
 2. the regulation of the internal government of the University.
- c. The board may, by a vote of two-thirds of the individuals then serving as members of the board, vote to merge the University with any other nonprofit organization.

University Mission Statement:

The mission of the George Washington University is to educate individuals in liberal arts, languages, sciences, learned professions, and other courses and subjects of study, and to conduct scholarly research and publish the findings of such research.

Bylaws of The George Washington University:

ARTICLE III. BOARD OF TRUSTEES Section 1. General Powers of the Board of Trustees. The management, direction, and government of the University shall be vested in the Board of Trustees, hereinafter sometimes referred to as the "Board."

ARTICLE X. FACULTY CODE

The Board of Trustees shall have authority to adopt and amend a Faculty Code by an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the individuals then serving as members of the Board of Trustees. The Board shall exercise this authority only after the Board is satisfied that there has been a process of considered consultation with the faculty, including the Faculty Senate, and the President and Provost.

Faculty Code:

IX. FACULTY ROLE IN UNIVERSITY DECISION MAKING

A. The regular faculty shares with the officers of administration the responsibility for effective operation of the departments and schools and the university as a whole. In the exercise of this responsibility, the regular faculty plays a role in decisions on the appointment and promotion of members of the faculty and the appointment of the President, deans, departmental chairs, and other administrative officials with authority over academic matters. The regular faculty also participates in the formulation of policy and planning decisions affecting the quality of education and life at the university. This participation includes an active role in the development, revision, or elimination of curricular offerings of each department or school. The regular members of the faculty of a school are also entitled to an opportunity to make recommendations on proposals concerning the creation, consolidation, or elimination of departments, institutes, or other academic or research units making up a part of that school. The Faculty Senate or an appropriate committee thereof is entitled to an opportunity to make recommendations on proposals concerning the creation, consolidation, or elimination of schools or other major components of the university.

B. The faculty cannot perform an effective and responsible role in university decision making without the cooperation of the administrative officers of the university. This cooperation includes the provision of such information as is necessary to the development of sound, well-informed recommendations. Faculty bodies charged with responsibilities for particular policy and planning areas are entitled, to the extent feasible, to be informed sufficiently in advance of important decisions within their areas of competence to be able to provide their advice or recommendations to the appropriate university officials.

The George Washington University Faculty Organization Plan:

Article I. Purpose and Power

SECTION 2. STRUCTURES AND POWER

The Faculty Organization shall consist of two bodies: the Faculty Assembly (hereafter “Assembly”), which shall consist of academic personnel holding the rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or instructor who are in full-time service and the administrative personnel provided for hereafter; and the Faculty Senate (hereafter “Senate”), which shall be a representative body acting for the Faculty as the whole in legislative and advisory capacities. The powers, duties, and privileges of the Assembly and Senate shall be exercised in accordance with the Charter of the University and subject to the authority of the Board of Trustees, and they shall relate to matters that are of concern to more than one college, school, or division, or to the Faculty.

SECTION 4. Functions

The functions of the Assembly shall be to: (1) Receive information from the President, and such members of the University administration as he may designate, of matters of general University interest or faculty concern. (2) Receive reports from the Senate as to action it has taken and the activities of its committees, and, to the extent than anticipated, its proposed agenda and committee programs for the future. The Assembly shall have the power to direct the Senate to include in the agenda of the Senate or any of its committees, or to study and report back to the Assembly, or to take such other action as may be appropriate with respect to any matter of concern to the Assembly. The Assembly shall also have the power to review any action taken by the Senate and take such action on the basis thereof as the Assembly may deem appropriate. (3) Act as a referendum body on questions referred to it for that purpose by the Senate.

Article III. The Faculty Senate

SECTION 1. FUNCTIONS

The Faculty Senate, on behalf of the Faculty, shall, with respect to matters that are of concern to more than one college, school, or division, or to the Faculty: (1) Formulate principles and objectives and find facts, so as to recommend policies to the President; (2) Provide the President and the Board of Trustees with advice and counsel on such matters as they may request; (3) At the direction of the Assembly — or may, at the request of the faculty of any college, school, division or of individual faculty members, or on its own initiative — consider any matters of concern or interest to more than one college, school, or division, or to the Faculty, and make its recommendations or otherwise express its opinion with respect thereto, to the Assembly, the President, or through the President to the Board of Trustees; (4) Be the Faculty agency to which the President initially presents information and which he consults concerning proposed changes in existing policies or promulgation of new policies.

ⁱ [AGB Board of Director’s Statement on Shared Governance](#). (2017).

ⁱⁱ “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.” ([Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#))

ⁱⁱⁱ We have reviewed a variety of articles, case studies, survey results (for example, 2021 AAUP Shared Governance Survey) from a variety of sources to prepare this document. In addition, Arthur Wilson and Shaista Khilji attended the 2021 AAUP Conference, that was held virtually in June 2021.

^{iv} Version 1.0- “Operationalizing Shared Governance” – this document was shared with Provost Blake and President LeBlanc in September 2020, and with the trustees in May 2021.

^v Scott, R. (2020). [Leadership threats to shared governance in higher education](#). *AAUP Journal of Academic Freedom*, 11, p.1-17.

^{vi} Appropriate joint planning and effort mean that all components get to participate. As per the [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#), “Important areas of action involve at one time or another the initiating capacity and decision-making participation of all the institutional components.”

^{vii} [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#).

^{viii} [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#).

^{ix} [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#).

^x [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#).

^{xi} [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#).