



## **A RESOLUTION ON PRINCIPLES OF SHARED GOVERNANCE AND RECOMMENDED MECHANISMS FOR STRENGTHENING SHARED GOVERNANCE AT GW (22/13)**

**WHEREAS**, On November 19, 2021, the chair of the Board of Trustees (“Board”) convened a Shared Governance Task Force, composed of representatives of the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty; and

**WHEREAS**, the Task Force was charged to propose principles of shared governance endorsed by the Faculty and Administration, to be approved by the Board of Trustees, that reflect the mission, history, and values of the George Washington University; and

**WHEREAS**, consistent with the shared governance principles and roles and responsibilities of the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty, as reflected in the University Charter, the Board Bylaws, the Faculty Code, and the Faculty Organization Plan (“FOP”) (the “governing documents”), the document attached to this resolution (“Statement”) presents shared governance and related communications principles that the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty commit to along with recommended mechanisms to strengthen shared governance at GW; and,

**WHEREAS**, this Statement of Principles references, but does not alter or amend, the University’s current governing documents; and

**WHEREAS**, the purpose of this Statement is to recommend the adoption of these principles and additional mechanisms to strengthen the participation and coordination among the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty and encourage robust and multi-directional communication; and

**WHEREAS**, the additional mechanisms presented in this Statement create promising avenues for mutual respect, trust, and cooperation among the Faculty, Administration, and the Board;

### **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE FACULTY SENATE OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

1. Endorses the appended document, “Statement,” which will be presented to the Board for its final approval in April 2022;
2. Places great interpretive weight on the two important principles described in the Introduction – (1) the faculty are to have meaningful participation in all areas that impact the academic mission and (2) are the primary decision-makers on academic matters -- and will rely on these principles in interpreting the Statement;
3. Recommends that further discussions of shared governance include national best practices and standards, as encapsulated in the 1966 "Statement on Governments of Colleges and Universities" formulated jointly by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), the American Council on Education (ACE) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP);

4. Recommends that future discussions of shared governance appreciate the vital importance of Senate committees, where faculty and staff collaboratively bring their expertise to bear in policymaking and problem solving. Providing these committees with meaningful opportunities to participate in policymaking and strategic planning in their respective areas, as mandated by the FOP, is essential for the success of our mission as a university; and
5. Recommends that Faculty, Administration, and the Board periodically assess their commitment to shared governance principles, the recommended mechanisms, and operational implementation approaches.

Faculty Senate Executive Committee  
April 1, 2022

Adopted as amended by the Faculty Senate  
April 8, 2022

# STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES OF SHARED GOVERNANCE AND RECOMMENDED MECHANISMS TO STRENGTHEN SHARED GOVERNANCE AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## Introduction

On November 19, 2021, the chair of the Board of Trustees (“Board”) convened a Shared Governance Task Force, composed of representatives of the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty. The Task Force was charged to propose principles of shared governance endorsed by the Faculty and Administration, to be approved by the Board of Trustees, that reflect the mission, history, and values of the George Washington University. Consistent with the shared governance principles and roles and responsibilities of the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty, as reflected in the University Charter, the Board Bylaws, the Faculty Code, and the Faculty Organization Plan (“FOP”) (the “governing documents”), this document (“Statement”) presents shared governance and related communications principles that the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty (“we”) commit to along with recommended mechanisms to strengthen shared governance at GW. This Statement of Principles references, but does not alter or amend, the University’s current governing documents.

Shared governance at the University has come to connote two fundamental principles: (1) providing Faculty with a meaningful role in key decision-making processes as reflected in the governing documents, often through elected representation; and (2) entrusting to the Faculty the primary responsibility for specific areas of decision making relating to University’s academic mission. Our governing documents make clear that there are structures already in place at the University that allow for coordinated participation in shared governance by the Board, Administration, and Faculty. However, in view of the “future aspirations of GW while reflecting the mission, history, and values of the university<sup>1</sup>”, the purpose of this Statement is to recommend the adoption of these principles and additional mechanisms to strengthen the participation and coordination among the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty and encourage robust and multi-directional communication.

## Statement of Shared Governance Principles

The following statement of shared governance principles is intended to provide the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty with the tools and guidance to more effectively and appropriately implement shared governance at the University.

**Commitment to Shared Governance.** We are committed to the principles of shared governance, as outlined in the University’s governing documents and this Statement to achieve excellence in our academic mission.

**Board Delegation of Authority to the Administration.** We recognize that the Board is vested with the ultimate legal and fiduciary responsibility for the affairs of the University and in the

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<sup>1</sup> The official charge of the Shared Governance Taskforce. Available at: <https://trustees.gwu.edu/shared-governance-task-force>

exercise of that authority understand that it has delegated to the Administration the responsibility to manage the day-to-day affairs of the University. In that regard, we recognize that governance is not management and that the Administration must have the ability to discharge its management responsibilities, with appropriate oversight from the Board and participation of the faculty as described in the governing documents, understanding that mechanisms will be in place to hold the Administration accountable for its actions.

**Board Delegation of Authority to the Faculty.** We recognize that the Board has delegated to the Faculty primary but not exclusive responsibility for academic matters identified in the Faculty Code, and the FOP.

**Recognition of the Faculty Senate and Faculty Assembly.** We recognize that the Board, through its adoption of the FOP, and the Administration acknowledge that the Faculty has two faculty bodies – the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Assembly – that serve as the principal mechanisms through which the Faculty participate in shared governance.

We recognize the role of the Faculty Senate and its committees to advise the President and Provost on matters affecting the academic mission and educational policies of the University, and to ensure faculty participation in University-level shared governance, as set forth in the Faculty Code, FOP, and this Statement.

**The Administration as the Primary Conduit of Communication Between the Board and Faculty.** We recognize, based on the delegation of responsibilities from the Board to the Administration, that shared governance has its greatest meaning not in the relationship of the Faculty to the Board, but in the Faculty’s relationship with the University President and the Administration. We are committed through this principle to maintaining a relationship of collaboration, trust, and mutual respect between the Faculty and the Administration, understanding that there must also be a relationship of trust and mutual respect between the Faculty and the Board. In addition, we recognize that the Administration is not the exclusive conduit for communication between the Faculty and the Board, and that there will be specific mechanisms for communication between the Board and the Faculty, as described in this Statement.

**Education and Understanding.** We are committed to promoting ways to increase the understanding by the Faculty of the role and responsibilities of the Board, and the understanding by the Board of the role and responsibilities of the Faculty. This may be accomplished through education and training of the Board, Administration, and the Faculty at initial orientation and at other appropriate times, and opportunities for informal gatherings between faculty members and Board members as described in the Statement of Communications Principles below.

**Effective Communication.** We are committed to developing and maintaining effective and appropriate communication, as set forth in the Statement of Communications Principles below.

**Transparency.** We are committed to transparency in institutional decision-making and managing the university. We encourage an environment that allows for free exchange of ideas and candid discourse for everyone on campus and those serving on institutional governance bodies and committees. At the same time, we recognize that there may be legal or business reasons why certain

information may not be shared, for example, on personnel matters or competitively sensitive issues, and as referenced earlier, that governance is not management.

**Excellence.** We are committed to excellence in all that we do, and we will carry out our responsibilities and our interactions in a way that promotes excellence.

**Flexibility.** We understand that there may be occasions where decisions directly affecting the academic enterprise of the University need to be made more quickly and in a way that may not allow for an extended consultative process. We recognize this need for flexibility and agility but are committed to seeking input appropriate under the circumstances, consistent with the Faculty Organization Plan (e.g., expedited consultation with members of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate).

### **Recommended Mechanisms to Strengthen Shared Governance**

The following recommended mechanisms are intended to enhance the above principles in creating and maintaining a relationship of collaboration, trust, and mutual respect between the Faculty, Board, and Administration.

1. The Board will meet with members of FSEC at least twice per year to discuss university-wide issues of interest. The President shall work collaboratively with members of FSEC to provide a structured agenda for these meetings.
2. The Board shall evaluate the President annually and shall conduct a periodic 360-degree review of the President that shall include an evaluation of the President's commitment and adherence to shared governance. Input from all stakeholders (including faculty) will be integral part of this 360-degree review process. With the President's consent, the Board shall provide the FSEC a confidential general summary of the 360-degree review on the issue of adherence and commitment to shared governance.
3. We realize that shared governance is an ongoing process. Hence, we shall hold ourselves accountable for effective evaluation, continuous improvement, and ensuring we stay responsive to our environmental needs. To that end, we shall work collaboratively to conduct a periodic (possibly every 2-3 years) campus climate and shared governance survey, to be overseen by the Administration. We also commit to periodic revisitation of operational implementation approaches as necessary.

### **Statement of Communications Principles and Recommendations**

The following statement of communications principles and recommendations is intended to provide the Board, Administration, and Faculty with the tools and guidance to enhance communication critical to effective shared governance at the University.

1. **Orientation:** The 2022 Shared Governance Survey identified the need for Faculty, Administration, and the Board to educate each other about respective roles, structures, concerns, and culture. **We recommend that the faculty, administration, and trustees should be provided with appropriate orientation and onboarding experiences.** This should involve all parties and specifically address the principles and aspirations for shared

governance, identification of the key roles and responsibilities of the faculty, administration, and the board, the existing structures and mechanisms for governance and management, the key governing documents, and academic mission for the University. The overall purpose of this orientation and onboarding will be to foster an institutional culture of goodwill, trust, and collaboration.

2. **Strategic Context and the Academic Mission:** Decisions at the University are made within a dynamic strategic context that advances its academic mission. The 2022 Shared Governance Survey identified the following challenges affecting higher education: access, affordability and funding, enrollment challenges (changing population, quality, international students), attracting and retaining high-quality faculty, corporatization of universities, faculty burn-out, maintaining and building trust, value proposition and delivering academic excellence, budget and high costs, and size of administration. **We recommend that the President, Provost, and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee work collaboratively with the faculty, administration, and the trustees to identify and address critical challenges and opportunities facing the University.** The Faculty, Administration, and Board should be operating with a common awareness of the challenges and constraints facing the University and its key decision-makers.
3. **Forms and Methods of Communications:** To build effective engagement between the Administration and Faculty, consistent and multi-directional communication is essential. **We recommend that the Administration and Faculty Senate, should collaboratively identify additional key mechanisms, frequency, and methods for its communication and engagement with each other.** The President is accountable to both the Board and the Faculty to have robust engagement with faculty to assure that the university's resources are focused optimally on the education, research, and patient care missions. The President is also responsible for bringing forward to the Board, faculty issues/problems and exciting opportunities for strengthening the quality and impact of the academic mission.
4. **Enhancing and promoting the George Washington University Reputation:** It is important for all parties to continue to enhance the University's reputation for academic excellence and scholarship. Strengthening the image and elevating the reputation of the University as a center of academic excellence and scholarship are of vital importance to successfully engage and attract students, alumni, staff, faculty, and other stakeholders. This understanding shall not be construed to impair or otherwise affect the academic freedom of faculty members guaranteed by Article II of the Faculty Code and the University's Guidelines on Academic Freedom.

## **Conclusion**

The GW governing documents establish shared governance mechanisms that include a significant role for the Faculty, especially on issues relating to the academic enterprise. The additional mechanisms presented in this Statement build on this foundation and create promising avenues for mutual respect, trust, and cooperation among the Faculty, Administration, and the Board.