Advisory Council of Faculty Senates (ACFS)
Statement of Shared Governance
Endorsed by ACFS October 7, 2011

This document is a suggested template for SUS institutions interested in developing a Statement of Shared Governance for their own institution.

Definition of Shared Governance:

Shared Governance is the participation of faculty, staff and students as applicable, administrators, the president and board of trustees (herein after referred to as stakeholders) in the decision and policy-making process to promote the institutional vision and mission, academic integrity and sustainability of the dynamic academic environment while retaining public accountability.

Statement of the Purpose of Shared Governance:

The purpose of shared governance in an institution of higher education is to provide shared responsibility among stakeholders for quality improvement and productivity through the creation of a partnership based on mutual respect and collaboration. Such shared responsibility entails working toward mutual goals to embrace a unified vision established by a fully enfranchised intellectual community. Shared governance involves collaborative efforts to fulfill and fully execute the institutional mission by participating in matters including:

a) the identification of priorities;
b) the development of policy;
c) defining responsibility for ethical leadership;
d) the enhancement of community partnerships, and
e) the governance of the academic institution as a whole.

Statement of Necessary Components of Shared Governance:

1) Stakeholders: Shared governance requires shared responsibilities among stakeholders whose roles or involvement include shaping, executing, and realizing the vision and mission of the academic institution, preserving academic freedom, academic integrity, students successes and public accountability for the institution. Therefore, shared governance in an academic institution requires engaging faculty, staff, and academic administrators including the provost, deans, associate deans, directors, chairs, the president, the board of trustees, and students as applicable, or any combination of these entities.

2) Initiation of Shared Governance Actions: Initiation of ideas and academic needs evolve from various stakeholders; as such, the decision-making authority varies based on the topic being addressed. Leaders must involve other stakeholders to assure that the institutional need and mission are met without jeopardizing any aspect of institutional services or responsibilities.

3) Responsible Parties and Decision Ownership: Stakeholder contributions and roles vary based on the charge and party responsible for implementing resolutions. Stakeholders make decisions, share decision-making, provide recommendations, or make endorsements based on their ownership in the situation. Roles of responsible parties and stakeholders are defined as determination, recommendation, or consultation:

a) Determination: whereby all stakeholders will recognize that delegation of authority to determine certain matters is best handled by a specific stakeholder.
b) Recommendation: whereby appropriate stakeholder(s) recommend to the President, the administration or their designee, certain policy and procedures. Recommendation involves reaching joint decisions.
c) Consultation: whereby stakeholder(s) have input into the decision-making process, and are informed of the nature and rationale for decisions prior to implementation.

4) Process of Shared Governance: Activities evolve through various stakeholders. Timeliness, efficiency, clarity in communication and appropriate dissemination of information are significant features of shared governance.

An effective process of shared governance is characterized by:

a) collegiality, mutual trust, and democracy – stakeholders openly voice support for shared governance, commit resources, convene meetings and set the agenda and priorities;
b) seeking and incorporating views from stakeholders who have relevant information, expertise, and/or may be impacted by decisions;
c) transparency and accountability to stakeholders throughout the process;
d) ongoing monitoring, mutual review and assessment that result in recommendations that further the efficacy of Shared Governance, and
e) clarity of roles and guidelines for stakeholders with respect to academic activities, administrative activities, strategic planning, faculty status, selection and review of academic administrators and policy making related to academic welfare, rules of due process and resolution:

      i) Academic activities are areas for which the faculty holds primary responsibility; therefore, faculty will determine academic policy, scholastic policy and academic ethics. Academic policy includes programmatic accreditation, evaluation of students, authorization and direction of curricula; courses, program and degree offerings. Scholastic policy includes standards for admission, grading, continuation, graduation, and honors. Academic Ethics include development of policies and procedures as well as research and scholarship.

      ii) Administrative activities are areas for which the administration holds primary responsibility. Therefore, the administration will determine policy implementation, budget reports, compliance and resources.

      iii) Strategic planning involves multiple stakeholders. These areas include faculty positions, research space, finance allocation, and restructuring or making organizational changes. Administration will require recommendation from faculty. Staff recommendation is also required for finance allocation.

      iv) Faculty status including appointment, retention, promotion and tenure criteria and evaluation, and professional development are areas that require faculty acting jointly with the administration. Reward systems, discipline and termination are areas that require administration acting jointly with the faculty, particularly those related to areas of faculty positions and faculty quality, welfare, planning, budget, resource allocation, academic facilities and infrastructure.

      v) Selection and review of academic administrators as well as making policy concerning the general academic welfare of the university requires faculty acting jointly with the administration. Faculty recommendations are therefore required. Staff and student consultations are also expected.

      vi) Rules for due process and resolution of issues and responsibilities are required of the faculty governance body and the administration. Determination is based on the area to which such rules and resolution apply.

An example chart for shared governance for the University of Florida can be seen on this link: http://www.senate.ufl.edu/archives/committees/governanceTaskForce/report13.pdf

5) Implementation of the Shared Governance Process: Universities utilize a formal implementation of the Shared Governance Process through integration of these principles in the constitution or bylaws and through written documents such as memorandum of understanding between the faculty governance entity and the administration, and other applicable constituent associations. A Board of Trustees resolution endorsing shared governance establishes the commitment of shared governance at the highest level. An example is the 2003 resolution from the UF BOT supporting shared governance (see http://www.trustees.ufl.edu/resolutions/r03_14.pdf).

Ultimately, all stakeholders – including but not limited to administration, colleges, schools, and departments – must rely on the structures, principles, and processes of Shared Governance to make decisions at all levels. Decisions emerging from the Shared Governance process shall not be overturned without further deliberation among and action by all relevant stakeholders.

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