



*University of Denver*  
**FACULTY FORUM**

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## **Shared Governance: Finding Common Ground**

In this newsletter, several members of our community describe their views of and experiences with shared governance: past, present, and future Faculty Senate presidents, faculty members, and the President of the DU chapter of AAUP. Three longer essays, with perspectives on what has worked, what hasn't worked, and what is possible, conclude the newsletter. Our hopes are that these pieces will generate discussion among the faculty on campus, so that we start finding common ground in our understanding of and expectations about shared governance. Join the conversation at the *Faculty Forum Weblog*, available on the Faculty Senate website, <http://www.du.edu/facsen/>.

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### **Is the Faculty Senate an Effective Partner in Shared Governance? The Faculty Senate President Perspective**

Michael Levine-Clark  
Faculty Senate President, 2008-2010

I get asked a lot by non-academic friends what the Faculty Senate does. I explain that it is a crucial piece of the shared governance structure in a university; that it serves as a forum for the faculty to discuss issues and help formulate policies relating to faculty status, curricular issues, and any other topics of broad concern to the faculty; and that it provides a formal voice for the faculty. And then I usually have to admit that it is not as active a body as I wish it were.

Most of the business of the Faculty Senate at DU seems to be in reaction to reports, policies, and procedures generated elsewhere in the university. For some of these – a tobacco-free campus, new general education requirements – there is lively debate. Most of the time, though, we listen, we ask a few questions, and then we serve as a rubber stamp. I was concerned about this for a while; I found our inability to serve as a proactive body to which others on campus would have to react to be frustrating, and I've heard colleagues on the Senate express that same concern. And maybe this reactive role is okay. The Senate should talk about whether a more assertive role for itself is necessary or desirable. We are certainly not abnormal in this regard.

The literature on faculty senates is fairly depressing.<sup>1</sup> Senates are characterized as ineffective, dysfunctional -

useless. In a study of faculty senates at 54 institutions, James T. Minor found that many are like ours: they react to issues that are brought to them from various constituencies across campus, and usually do so without much debate. But occasionally, and encouragingly, senates can be quite assertive when an important issue arises.<sup>2</sup> When something as important and concerning as the appointment of Marc Holtzman occurs, senates react forcefully. Usually, though, most faculty members, and most faculty senators, are too busy with their own work or with issues more narrowly concerned with their departments to interact with broader university-level topics. Having a voice in campus decisions, even if it is usually a quiet voice, may be enough.

It seems to me that perceptions about the senate are vitally important. How does the university perceive its senate? Does the administration see it as effective? And, related to that, does the administration think that the senate should be consulted? The American Association of University Professors has a checklist of "Traits of Effective Senates," two of which are "Is regarded by the campus as dealing with crucial issues," and "Is seen as an agent for necessary institutional change."<sup>3</sup> I don't know whether those important perceptions are there at DU. It is worth noting that Minor discovered that faculty members tend to view the administration as more powerful than it imagines itself to be, and that administrators tend to see the faculty and faculty senates as more powerful than they imagine themselves to be. It would be interesting to explore those differing perceptions here.

Is our Faculty Senate effective enough? Should we be pushing for a stronger role? If we do need to become a stronger body, we should be pushing our faculty colleagues to be more active partners in shared governance; to pay more attention to the Senate agenda, to pay more attention to the work of university-wide faculty committees, and to speak up earlier in the process. If we want the Faculty Senate to be taken seriously by the university, we should make sure that the faculty takes it seriously.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Robert Birnbaum, "The Latent Organizational Functions of the Academic Senate: Why Senates Do Not Work But Will Not Go Away," *Journal of Higher Education* 60, no. 4, 1989: 423-443.

<sup>2</sup> James T. Minor, "Understanding Faculty Senates: Moving from Mystery to Models," *The Review of Higher Education* 27, no. 3: 343-363.

<sup>3</sup> American Association of University Professors, "Traits of Effective Senates," <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/governance/effetsen.htm>, accessed 29 April, 2010.



## **Shared Governance: A Former Faculty Senate President Perspective**

Cathryn Potter

Faculty Senate President, 2004-2006

Associate Provost for Research

Shared governance is a topic that creates endless opportunities for opinion and discussion on university campuses. As a faculty member and institute director, former Faculty Senate President and current Associate Provost, I have seen the good, the bad and the ugly, as it were, with all three adjectives applying to both faculty and administrative behavior. Perhaps because of these experiences, I approach this writing assignment with some trepidation! Here I share some brief thoughts on university culture and leadership skills for shared governance.

Shared governance refers to areas of decision-making in which both faculty and administrators serve as managers. The term "manager" may sound strange, but it is this shared responsibility for academic management that is at the heart of some of the case law related to the faculty role, notably the Yeshiva decision (444 U.S. 672, 1980). Historically, faculty members have traditionally shared responsibility for the curriculum, for decisions

related to entrance to the professoriate and progress in rank, and for decisions related to admission to programs of study. I start in this pedantic way to remind us that shared governance does not mean that all decisions of the University are jointly managed. One of the great challenges is to be clear about what we are sharing, and consistent about the processes for decision-making.

A culture of shared governance rests on a deceptively simple framework: in areas where well-meaning people can disagree about final decisions, legitimacy is conferred through the perceived legitimacy of the decision process. This highlights the need for consistent, transparent, well-understood processes in which multiple points of view are represented. Do processes need to be identical across campus in all areas of decision? In our decentralized environment, the DU culture says “no,” not just at the Dean level, but also at the unit and department culture level. Are there some downsides to this? Yes. Should some processes be centralized? Absolutely. Should all be clear and transparent, consistently applied and open to critique? Definitely.

When claims are made that shared governance is failing, we do need to distinguish between circumstances in which the decision process has failed in catastrophic ways, and circumstances in which some people disagree with the outcome. Often in the latter case, those who disagree don't feel their voice was heard, and this must be evaluated fairly, however the simple act of disagreement does not necessarily invalidate a process.

Perhaps because of our decentralized structure and strongly relational culture, DU does have a tendency to ad hoc decision processes. In this way we can disempower the standing decision structures, and allow concerns about process to undermine decisions. Moreover, many at the university do not take shared governance seriously, except in high-stakes situations. The leadership skills (faculty and administrative) needed for shared governance are not necessarily developed in the context of being a faculty member or conferred when taking on an administrative role. It is our responsibility to develop these skills in order to be effective leaders of shared governance. Unlike some of my colleagues, I see the need for leadership skill development very strongly in the faculty sphere, as well as occasionally in the administrative ranks. Some of my current national work involves paying attention to the leadership literature, and if I had more space here, I would opine further about how we might support leadership skill development across our community. Perhaps another time!

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### **Yes, Faculty Have a Say...: A Faculty Member's Perspective**

Frédérique Chevillot

Associate Professor

Department of Languages and Literatures

As several of my DU colleagues, whether presently serving on the Faculty Senate or not, have fiercely and passionately discussed in this issue, the philosophical, political, and technical concerns attached to the implementation of shared governance, I would like to add my most sincere and genuine conviction: at the University of Denver, faculty members have a say, and I would add an important one at that.

However, shared governance will only become a true opportunity and a convincing reality to the extent that we all actively get involved. Shared governance requires our time, our energy, and certainly some extra work. It also entails finding out what it is, what it means, and reading the present *Faculty Forum* newsletter is a great first step in that direction. It also calls for reading a few more texts (The Constitution of the Faculty Senate; its By-Laws, etc.); attending a few more meetings; drafting a few more documents.... It also means getting to know

dedicated colleagues from other departments on campus; becoming more acquainted with the “bigger picture” at DU; realizing that we are very powerful, indeed, in bringing about change and equity, but also that passionate dedication is good for the soul; and, finally, that there is, more often than not, such a thing as... a free lunch!

I would like to challenge all of us, faculty members at the University of Denver, to get more involved in contributing, indeed, to the task of governing our own institution. I urge all of us to commit to finding out what real channels of shared governance and decision-making are made available to us, the next time we get the annoying impression that some sort of decision has been “handed down” to us from higher above.

As DU faculty members we have a powerful say in many, if perhaps not all, of the decisions that are made at the highest administrative level which do concern us all. Let us not forget to let our voices be heard passionately and systematically, because it is actually possible.

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### **Shared Governance: An AAUP Perspective**

Dean Saitta

Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology  
President, DU Chapter AAUP

I take my definition from writings by current National AAUP President Cary Nelson and long-time AAUP activist Larry Gerber.

Shared governance is a negotiated strategy for distributing and adjudicating power within an educational institution in ways that ultimately serve the needs of democratic society. Shared governance on campus, however, is not grounded in the concept of democracy but rather in notions of expertise and professionalism. It differentiates responsibilities and assigns them to specific groups. For faculty, these responsibilities include establishing general education requirements, developing curriculum in the academic units, and hiring and promoting colleagues. Shared governance does not mean that trustees, administrators, and faculty are equally involved in decisions affecting the running of the university, or that every constituency gets to participate at every stage of decision-making. Ultimate legal authority over an institution rests with the Board of Trustees, which delegates authority and accountability for many academic and non-academic matters to administrators. However it is always appropriate and wise to have faculty consultation on matters that impinge on academic mission such as plans for new classroom buildings or new commercial initiatives.

Shared governance is both a structure and an ongoing process. It must be continually renewed, and involve people of good faith and generous spirit. Successful shared governance is inextricably linked to academic freedom, and the right of faculty to speak freely on issues relating to institutional policy without fear of marginalization or reprisal. Shared governance works best when it is so ingrained in practices and values that it never has to be mentioned. If we have to talk about it—or dedicate, as we have in the past few years, multiple issues of the *Faculty Forum* to writing about it—then it probably isn’t working too well.

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## One Building, Two Stories

Scott Leutenegger  
Professor, Computer Science Department  
and  
Alvaro Arias  
Associate Professor, Mathematics

In 2001 the department of mathematics and computer science, then within the Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering (NSME) division, split into a mathematics department (now in NSM) and a computer science department (now in SECS) due to diverging academic interests. These two departments still share a building, but, shared faculty governance differences have resulted in very different experiences. We believe comparing and contrasting these two departments helps explain where shared governance stands currently at DU: significantly different manifestations dependent on the unit. By comparing these two units we provide a glimpse of the variety of shared faculty governance on campus and possible consequences.

Mathematics has a shared faculty governance model, where faculty members have primary responsibilities in academic matters. This model has been implemented by senior faculty members and by the Deans of NSM. The model has created a positive environment that is conducive to research, teaching, and service and it has paid off. At the split, math was down to 6 faculty members, 16 majors, and 1 graduate student. It now has 12 faculty members, close to 70 majors, and 18 graduate students. The research productivity (i.e., number of publications, invited addresses, etc.) has increased and is comparable to some of the best math departments in the country. Since 2004, the department has organized at DU six national and international conferences in quantum structures, algebra, logic, and analysis.

Computer Science (CS) has a top-down model where many important decisions are made by the dean with little or no faculty input. This model has created an environment that has resulted in several grievances, high turnover of chairs, many years of open chair positions, a vote of no confidence, and low morale. Without meaningful faculty input, the Dean has created industry programs (on-location at Lockheed Martin and Northrup Grumman) that have drained the department's resources. Recent hires have had written into their contracts that they must teach at these programs, and in AY 2010 one half of the computer science appointed faculty teaching power is being spent off campus. Despite the increasing responsibilities in the industry programs, the CS faculty has shrunk. At the split, CS had 8 regular tenured and tenure-track faculty members and it now has 5 regular tenured or tenure-track faculty members. We note that when hired, the Dean's original plans were to grow the CS faculty from 8 to 15 by 2010. We believe one factor in the shrinking of the faculty is the poor overall morale resulting from a lack of shared faculty governance. As a result of the environment in computer science, the faculty have twice asked the Provost that CS be moved to back to NSM.

In the following table we highlight a few key shared governance issues and how they are realized in the two departments.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Computer Science Department</b> <b>School of Engineering and Computer Science</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mathematics Department</b> <b>Natural Sciences and Mathematics Division</b></p>
<p>School Constitution, quarterly meetings, and Division T&amp;P Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No written constitution.</li> <li>• Advisory Committee to the dean – all members appointed by the dean.</li> <li>• The dean chairs the quarterly meetings.</li> <li>• Agenda items are chosen by the dean.</li> <li>• Minutes are not officially taken, approved, or voted upon.</li> <li>• Calls for the creation of a divisional constitution have been dismissed by the dean as an unnecessary waste of time.</li> <li>• The dean appoints all members of the Divisional T&amp;P Committee and strongly rebuked the suggestion of departments electing members.</li> </ul>	<p>School Constitution, quarterly meetings, and Division T&amp;P Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitution approved by the faculty <a href="http://portfolio.du.edu/nsmfc">http://portfolio.du.edu/nsmfc</a></li> <li>• Elected NSM Faculty Committee.</li> <li>• The chair of the NSM Faculty Committee chairs the quarterly faculty meetings.</li> <li>• Agenda items are chosen by the NSM faculty committee and the dean.</li> <li>• Minutes of the meetings are prepared by the elected secretary of the faculty, and they are approved by the faculty.</li> <li>• All members of the Division T&amp;P Committee are elected. Each department elects one member.</li> </ul>
<p>Direction of department, academic standards, and tenure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite its small size, the CS faculty has been asked to go in many directions (e.g., industry, biocomputing). Faculty members have been asked to vote on an industry academic program proposal that had not been written, and they were reprimanded for not approving it without seeing the proposal.</li> <li>• Despite unanimous faculty opposition to conduct an external chair search in 2009, the dean started the search, which ended unsuccessfully.</li> <li>• The dean has unilaterally set unrealistic expectations for tenure. For example, in Sept 2005, the dean said that to be tenured in CS, a faculty member had to bring an average of \$150,000 in outside funding per year and support several graduate students. Later this number was changed to \$250,000, and then again later changed to \$150,000. The median funding per faculty member in CS departments ranked &gt; 36 is \$110,000 per year. The DU CS program would likely be ranked in the 80s or 90s due to our small size and hence comparable programs would have smaller funding per faculty member.</li> <li>• The last faculty member tenured was in 1998. The last two cases were turned down and recent three year reviews for current junior faculty members have been problematic. There have been grievances.</li> </ul>	<p>Direction of department, academic standards, and tenure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Without any pressure from the deans, the math faculty has been allowed to choose the direction of the department. They chose areas of research in pure mathematics, which makes sense given the size of the faculty (applied math usually requires large groups to be effective). The department has made hires based on quality as opposed to outside funding opportunities. This has given the department a competitive hiring advantage and they have hired some of the best people in some fields. During the 2010 search, the math department was able to hire their top choice out of 600 applicants.</li> <li>• The expectations for promotion and tenure are clear and realistic. Since the departments split (in 2001), no one has been denied tenure and all are having productive careers.</li> <li>• The department has created an environment that supports academic freedom, where faculty members are free to follow their passion. Outside funding has been obtained to organize several national and international conferences and to develop computer games to support mathematics.</li> </ul>
<p>Departmental meetings and regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two years after their approval, the dean invalidated departmental bylaws that had been approved unanimously by the faculty.</li> <li>• On at least one occasion, the dean altered the minutes of a faculty meeting without faculty knowledge and declared them “official” after his modifications. As a result, the faculty voted unanimously to voice-record all faculty meetings.</li> <li>• The dean unilaterally added a category of “collegiality and professionalism” to the annual faculty evaluations and this category was used to reprimand the faculty members who disagreed with the Dean’s policies.</li> </ul>	<p>Departmental meetings and regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The math department does not have departmental bylaws but several important regulations are covered by the NSM Constitution (e.g., tenure and tenure committees).</li> <li>• By tradition, all tenured and tenure-track faculty members participate in important decisions (e.g., everyone is a member of the hiring committees) and most decisions are done by consensus.</li> </ul>
<p>Administration load and budget transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The dean’s office has a full-time staff of 5 including the dean. In addition there is an associate dean, 3 chair positions, and 2 associate chair positions. In total they administer a unit of 25 tenured and tenure-track faculty.</li> <li>• Recently the dean stated that faculty teaching loads would need to be increased due to the challenging financial situation. This message is in direct contrast to the message delivered by the chancellor. There is no meaningful budget transparency to allow the faculty to ascertain the financial situation. It is difficult for faculty to share in the direction of the division if they have no idea where funds are currently being spent.</li> </ul>	<p>Administration load and budget transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The dean’s office has a full-time staff of 5 including the dean. Additionally, each of the 5 departments has a chair. In total they administer a unit of 50 tenured and tenure track faculty members.</li> <li>• According to the NSM Constitution, the NSM Faculty Committee reviews the Divisional Budget plan with the dean each Fall, makes recommendations, and reports to the faculty. In practiced this has not happened often.</li> </ul>

These two examples illustrate the long established benefits of faculty governance principles formulated jointly by the AAUP, the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universi-

ties and Colleges (AGB) in the 1966 “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities.” Shared faculty governance is not designed to give more power to the faculty or to weaken deans. It is designed to create environments conducive to teaching, research, and service because this is in the best interest of the university. This is why these principles were formulated also by university administrators.

These examples also illustrate the different models of faculty governance at DU. The most important decisions of shared governance, or lack thereof, take place at the division or college level. Our provost and chancellor had an excellent record working with the faculty when they were deans, and they manifest themselves in favor of these principles at the roundtable meetings with the faculty. The next step is to require all deans at DU to establish sound shared faculty governance models.

### **The Pulse of Shared Governance at DU: An Unvarnished Personal Account**

Dean Saitta  
Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology  
President, DU Chapter AAUP

It’s my opinion that the patient is not entirely well, and that faculty and administration have an obligation to work together to restore it to good health. Two governance experiences in which I was closely involved in the last couple of years convince me of this.

#### ***1. Debating Curricular Reform***

Establishing general education requirements is, in a shared governance world, the collective responsibility of faculty. While we might delegate an elected and/or appointed committee to spearhead the process, at the end of the day it is the faculty as a *community of expertise* that bears responsibility for how we generally educate our students. In this matter *all* faculty members should have an equal voice, and be heard.

I don’t believe that these fundamental principles of faculty governance were observed in our most recent round of general education review. Accepting the General Education Review Committee’s (GERC) invitation to provide input about what a new general education curriculum should look like, I sent several suggestions to GERC through my elected Faculty Senate and Social Sciences representatives. After GERC released a proposal that I did not think served the best interests of our students I wrote a “Counterproposal for General Education Reform,” copying it to GERC first. The counterproposal was grounded in a paradigm of liberal education, informed by comparative research, and spiced with assessment data. Although framed with provocative language, the document was not intended to compete with the official proposal. Rather, it was intended to stimulate wider faculty discussion about alternative approaches to generally educating our students. I’ll also confess that, as a former Faculty Senate President, I was interested in testing our processes of shared governance. I vetted the counterproposal with a respected academic administrator who encouraged me to go forward with it. I was egged on by sympathetic colleagues. I presented the counterproposal to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee which authorized its distribution to the academic units through their elected Senators. I wrote a column for the *Faculty Forum* weblog justifying my dissent. I gave a presentation at a Faculty Senate meeting to what I now remember as a not-entirely-friendly audience.

I have no idea how much discussion the counterproposal stimulated. I’m guessing not a lot, but that’s OK. Much more disturbing was the news—shared with me by colleagues in a position to know—that the counterpro-

posal was seen by some as illegitimate, as publicly undermining the work of GERC, and as violating faculty governance and process. I also learned that discussion in some units was actively discouraged for fear of legitimizing that which was considered illegitimate. Clearly, the document was not received in the spirit in which it was intended. All of this was astonishing to me. Floating a counterproposal might have been an audacious act, but it certainly wasn't an inappropriate one if we accept that *all* faculty members have status as co-owners of the curriculum. GERC didn't respond to the document, not even to say that "these ideas suck in principle and won't work in practice." Such a reaction, from a shared governance perspective, would have been much better than silence. When the time arrived for a faculty vote on the GERC proposal, I emailed Faculty Senate colleagues to thank them for their indulgence and to express concern about what appeared to be active suppression of dialogue about a curricular matter for which faculty have collective responsibility. There was another deafening silence and not a peep was heard from the Senate's Academic Planning Committee. This struck me as very odd because the Senate's Constitution explicitly empowers faculty to "formulate, debate, and adopt policy recommendations regarding any aspect of the life of the university and to communicate these recommendations to the administration."

This was not a shining example of shared governance as it relates to faculty members' obligations *to each other*. If we're not here to address and vigorously debate alternative ideas about curriculum and pedagogy —no matter what their source or form—then we're not only failing in our commitment to shared governance, but we're also failing in our responsibility as educators.

## ***2. Collaborating to Make Policy***

When I became Faculty Senate president in 2006 I inherited from my two immediate predecessors the challenge of clarifying the university's Faculty Grievance Policy. What currently passes for a policy is largely contained within that section of the Faculty Senate Constitution that describes the function of the Faculty Review Committee (i.e., section VI.A.1). Other pieces relevant to the policy are in our APT document and in the university's Employee Handbook. We thought that having a single document would be of great benefit to faculty members having workplace issues of the kind that a formal Faculty Grievance Policy addresses at many other institutions.

In summer 2007, the campus AAUP chapter set about drafting a formal policy that would bring the pieces together and add important details about process. We produced several early drafts of a policy. In September 2007, draft #5 was submitted to the Senate Personnel Committee. Draft #6 was vetted by Human Resources (HR). In February 2008, draft #7 was reviewed by the Deans Council and draft #8 made several significant revisions to the policy based on decanal input. Specifically, we eliminated an illustrative list of grievable issues, stipulated a mandatory first step of informal resolution, and recommended that deans have a seat on the Faculty Review Committee, should one of their peers be named as a respondent in a grievance proceeding. We also agreed to exclude from the grievance process disputes over salary. This was a major concession: even though salary inequity is identified as a grievable issue under the Senate Constitution, we had assurances that such disputes could be effectively handled through HR's general employee grievance process.

We submitted draft #8 to the AAUP chapter and Faculty Senate for more discussion, and we received additional input from members of the standing Faculty Review Committee. In May 2008 a third Senate presidency expired without achieving a final policy. In May 2009 (around about draft #11), the provost convened a joint deans-faculty committee to achieve closure. However, our process broke down at draft #13 (perhaps an omen?) when it became clear that we were heading in a direction that threatened to eliminate a number of other grievable issues currently covered by the Senate Constitution. Not only was the policy's scope being narrowed, but approval of a Faculty Grievance Policy was becoming contingent on approval of an *administrator* grievance policy aimed at



faculty members who were perceived as not meeting their teaching and research obligations. This struck us as somewhat odd given the significant power that deans already have to protect their rights and interests. At death's door but still willing to press forward using existing Senate Constitution provisions and AAUP recommendations as a baseline, in early September 2009 we asked our decanal colleagues if they saw any point in continuing. I believe it's accurate to describe the decanal response as constituting a "No," but some of my joint deans-faculty committee colleagues disagree.

This was not a shining example of shared governance as a negotiated strategy for adjudicating power in a way that respects the rights and interests of *different* constituencies. We do small-scale shared governance as well as most universities. But both of these larger-scale governance processes—each important to the health and vitality of the institution—could have gone better. Faculty and administrators must share the blame, and we need to work much better together to get things right. Other contributors to this issue of the *Faculty Forum* identify some ways of doing just that.

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### **A Path Towards Shared Governance**

Donald J. McCubbrey

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President-elect, University Faculty Senate 2009-2010

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

-- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Do we have a problem with shared governance at DU? The answer to this question is "yes." Is it a widespread concern? The answer to this question is "no." However, when it arises in a particular way, or as it does more often, in a particular unit, can it cause the unit to exhibit dysfunctional behavior? I've heard enough evidence at Senate Executive and AAUP Chapter meetings to convince me that the answer is "yes." Finally, is there a way to develop a shared governance model at DU that will prevent dysfunctional behavior in the first place and to correct it quickly when it arises? The answer to this question is "I think so." That is the purpose of this piece.

In the July 23, 2009 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Gary A. Olson, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Idaho State University, wrote an article entitled "Exactly What is Shared Governance?" (Olson 2009). It is a thoughtful and well-written article, so much so that I can best begin the process of defining a path to shared governance by quoting from it.

"Shared governance," Olson says, "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."

In laying the groundwork, Olson notes that "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,” Olson continues, “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 (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (ABGUC) in the mid-60s (AAUP 1966). That statement attempted to affirm the importance of shared governance and state some common principles.”

One of the key principles is that “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.”

Olson concludes his article by observing that “True shared governance attempts to balance maximum participation in decision making with clear accountability. 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 (i.e. transparency), and when they are invited to participate as true partners, the institution prospers. That, after all, is our common goal.”

Broad and unending (and free and open) communication within our community as the path to shared governance makes sense. But how do we go about achieving free and open communication in order to avoid dysfunctional behavior and, more importantly, to leverage our community’s collective intelligence? Clearly, no one feels they must express their opinion on every issue (well, almost no one). On the other hand, if a member of the community wants to chime in on an issue, he or she should feel free to do so. Indeed, members of the community should be encouraged to do so, and when they do, to be unhindered by any fear of retaliation from persons in power, be they senior faculty, department chairs, deans, or others in administrative positions.

“Speaking truth to power” is the term ethicists use to describe the importance of creating an open, participative, environment in an organization. It supports healthy climates within an organization, and will lead, in the end, to better decisions in the best interests of all.

James O’Toole, currently a professor-in-residence at the Daniels College of Business, has studied this topic for many years. Based on his experience in consulting with several large corporations, he has concluded “that managers in companies with healthy cultures were constantly willing to rethink even their most basic assumptions through a process of constructive dissent” (Bennis, Goleman, and O’Toole 2008). In the referenced chapter, he and his co-authors trace the issue back to Sophocles’ fourth-century B.C. play *Antigone*. “Indeed,” they say, “the play is the source of the modern cliché, ‘shooting the messenger.’”

Sophocles puts one moral of the story in the mouth of the messenger: “To reject good counsel is a crime,” and another moral is spoken by a blind “seer”: “Stubbornness and stupidity are twins.” The play is a reminder to leaders that their ethical duty is to create what, in a modern organizational context, Warren Bennis calls a “culture of candor.” The ancient Greeks had a word for culture: *ethos*. Often translated as “character,” significantly, it also is the root of the Modern English word “ethics.”

“Finally,” they write, “actions that break down the artificial barriers that separate the few at the top of an organization from the many down-the-line serve to encourage an increased flow of information. In this regard, continued executive resistance to such proven practices as employee involvement and other forms of participa-

tion in decision making and sharing information is nothing short of remarkable, if not shocking. That is the definition of transparency, of a company with no secrets, one in which every employee is empowered to speak the truth. In sum, this most un-Creon-like behavior is what the ancient Greeks called 'virtuous leadership.'"

Hopefully, the above discussion has created a better understanding of what shared governance means. The path to achieving a "culture of candor" relies on developing a common understanding of the term among all units, and one way to do this is to engage each unit in the development of a written social contract. Ideally, the social contract will look the same for all units of the university in fundamental ways, with perhaps minor variations between units.

For example, in December 2009, the Management Steering Council at Daniels developed and adopted a social contract for itself. It was circulated to each Daniels department with the suggestion that departments consider adopting a social contract for themselves as well. It's a great illustration of a set of guidelines for implementing and maintaining a culture of shared governance (and I had nothing to do with its creation). It's below as an appendix. Please consider something similar for your unit. It will help pull us together so that our collective intelligence and energies can be marshaled effectively and be focused on our common goals. It's a path towards shared governance that could work for us.

AAUP 1966. "Statement on Governance of Colleges and Universities" <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/governancestatement.htm>, accessed March 31, 2010.

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## **Appendix Social Contract Daniels College Management Steering Council**

### *Preamble*

The Management Council collectively represents the leadership of the Daniels College. While the culture encompasses a broader community, our values and behavior can have a great influence, for better or worse, on each other and the larger College community. The purpose of this Social Contract is to set forth the behavioral expectations of one another.

### *Engagement*

We will:

- Be honest and transparent with no hidden agendas.
- Respect other realities and perspectives in order to understand what each other is dealing with and be supportive.
- Help each other and do not hesitate to ask for help.
- Have forums to discuss tough issues.
- Maintain positive attitudes.
- Say "thank you" and "great job" more often.
- Live up to others' trust in us.
- Hold each other accountable for the social contract, without giving or taking offense.

### *Communications*

We will communicate:

- With respect.
- Openly with full disclosure.
- In an inclusive manner.
- By listening to all ideas without initial evaluation.
- To the broader community, up and down the organization, and ask for input from all stakeholders and constituencies.
- By supporting the decisions of the group in our communications with others .

### *Results Orientation*

We will:

- Embrace change and be willing to re-invent ourselves.
- Focus on our priorities and make sure the rest of the organization understands the mission of the College and the “big picture.”
- Collaborate and synchronize our efforts.
- Practice a stewardship orientation by putting others first and educating others.
- Move beyond “ground rules” to a deeper level where we not only play nicely but we execute on our goals.

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