



University of Denver
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Of Vision and Values, Corporate and Collegial Tensions, Shared Governance and Social Capital . . .

VISION & VALUES...

As articulated by the UPAC (University Planning Advisory Council) last year, it is our vision that

"The University of Denver will be a great university dedicated to the public good. Our students will enjoy an extraordinary education. Our search for knowledge will be daring. Our community will be diverse and dynamic."

And as for our values:

"As an educational and research community, we value curiosity, intellectual freedom, open communication, creativity and rigor. We respect individual differences and embrace civil discourse. We promote ethical behavior, integrity, caring, and close individual attention. Our campus life is distinguished by inclusiveness, collaboration, involvement, responsiveness, and accountability."

As we work together to achieve these 21st-century institutional goals, we must invigorate our system of shared governance in order to bolster our efforts to become a "great university". To be successful, our faculty must remain central and collectively involved in the next phase of growth initiatives that focus on research, teaching and

learning, creativity and scholarship.

CORPORATE & COLLEGIAL TENSIONS...

Colleges and universities across the nation are struggling with the apparently necessary tension between the corporate management style on which we rely for our continued success and the collegial culture of academics that is rooted in our history and tradition. Faculty, students and staff voice their frustrations about not feeling sufficiently included in important discussions, even though our administrative leaders have created new opportunities for collaborative discussion and consultative decision-making. Administrators are frustrated by the time and energy that is required to consult with the various constituencies. Trustees may feel that too much consultation hinders a timely response to concerns or emergencies and cripples entrepreneurial initiatives that could take better advantage of shifting demographics, changing markets, and unexpected opportunities.

Consider the contrasting connotations of "corporate culture" and "collegial culture". In the corporate culture of the University, the legalized University corporation is a faceless entity that is endowed by law with the rights and liabilities of an individual. This is "the University" that demands protection by a growing collection of policies and procedures designed to secure the name, trademark, properties, and futures of "the corporation."

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The “corporate culture” of the University favors strategic plans, competition, benchmarks and outcomes that can be measured in the short term. In contrast, the “collegial culture” of the University prizes independence and reflective process. Academics generally work best within a decision-making framework in which power and authority are vested equally in all participants. For faculty, the “true University” is not the legal corporation, but rather the day-to-day interaction of teacher and student. Faculty value collaborative discourse and debate among peers without an overlay of corporate power structure.

The University of Denver has tremendous potential to benefit from the positive aspects of both the “corporate” and the “collegial” in our efforts to build a great university. As we work together to find ways to blend the complementary aspects of administrative and scholarly endeavors, our greatest future successes will be built upon trust in our system of shared governance. And trust depends upon successful stewardship of our social capital as we measure our goals and accomplishments against our shared values.

INGREDIENTS OF SUCCESSFUL GOVERNANCE...

Three key ingredients of successful governance are: participation, responsiveness and efficiency. Our opportunities to participate in shared governance at the University of Denver are very different from the opportunities of faculty at some public institutions. We are not constrained by the potentially divisive climate of unionization and collective bargaining that sets the tone and limits the discourse at many public institutions. Approximately 40% of colleges and universities in the United States are controlled by collective bargaining agreements. Faculty unions dramatically affect the management of public universities and colleges. In many cases, these agreements limit or prevent faculty from participating in administrative work, including governance. ([AAC&U Peer Review](#), 2001)

The expectation of faculty participation in private (independent) universities is reflected in the Yeshiva decision of 1980, in which the Supreme Court ruled that faculty at private universities are managers of the educational enterprise; and, as such, are not employees covered by labor law and eligible for union bargaining

and contracts. Instead, we, as faculty, are considered to be supervisors of our curriculum and scholarship – our own bosses in the business of education, discovery, and creative expression. In the majority statement, Justice Powell cited the fact that faculty participate on many committees and make recommendations “to the dean or director in every case of faculty hiring, tenure, sabbaticals, termination and promotion. Although the final decision is reached by the central administration on the advice of the dean or director, the overwhelming majority of faculty recommendations are implemented”. In a strongly dissenting argument, Justice Brennan held that while the University may at times follow the faculty’s advice, “the University always retains the ultimate decision-making authority... and the administration gives that weight and import to the faculty’s collective judgment as it chooses and deems consistent with its own perception of the institution’s needs and obligations.” Some faculties of private institutions have challenged the Yeshiva ruling, but the precedent holds. We – as a faculty group at a private university – are managers, not employees. ([American Educator](#), 1997)

Our successful and constructive participation in the shared governance process demands a certain level of mutual responsiveness from faculty and administrators. If we expect administrative and budgetary decisions to respond to the needs of the academy, then, in turn, the administration should expect from us a sensitivity and responsiveness to the business needs of our enterprise. The Faculty Senate has the responsibility to set reasonable goals and maintain a track record of timely discussion, deliberation and decision-making.

Finally, corporate approaches target efficiency that allows for quick and flexible responses. In our independent status as a private university, unfettered by the control and limitations of legislative mandates, we have the unique opportunity to shape our university’s future and destiny. However, research on “corporate-like” management models has revealed the emergence of potential problems, including the risk of losing sight of institutional values and integrity (Sporn, 1999). At times, it will be essential that we restrain our own entrepreneurial efficiency in order to assure that we serve societal needs and truly dedicate ourselves to the “*public good*”. We set high standards for ourselves as an academic community. When we purport to “*promote ethical behavior, integrity, [and] caring*”, we obligate ourselves to earn and protect

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the public trust. We challenge ourselves to live up to being symbolic leaders for the Denver community at large and for other communities in the US and across the world that are affected by our activities, our students and our alumni.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AS COMMUNITY CURRENCY . . .

As faculty, students, staff and administrators, we are members of a dynamic community that is "*distinguished by inclusiveness, collaboration, involvement, responsiveness, and accountability.*" These are lofty values. Sociologist James Coleman (1988) uses the term "social capital" to describe and measure the establishment and maintenance of relationships that allow a group of individuals to achieve important and shared goals. Social capital is a type of currency that is earned and spent. Keeping the social capital account in the black depends upon continuous, successful cultivation of relationships. All relationships that affect the social capital reflect the balance of obligations and expectations. The expectations of any relationship depend upon reciprocity, support, fidelity and honesty.

This last year our administration has invested in our collective social capital by promoting teamwork and collaborative input from UPAC (the University Planning Advisory Council) for developing our new Vision, Values, Mission and Goals statements. This year, expanded working groups, coordinated by task force conveners, are working to make recommendations for 3-5 year budget planning. Another group is working to invigorate our undergraduate curriculum with donorship support. In response to these administrative initiatives, we, as faculty, must reciprocate by being willing to give up some of our autonomy in order to share constructively in this (sometimes exhausting) process of institutional planning and development.

IN CLOSING . . .

We must live our commitment to shared governance and work to counterbalance corporate enthusiasm with academic caution as we work to make the University of Denver "*a great private university dedicated to the public good.*" As we continue to build trust and contribute to our collective social capital, it is my hope that individuals will feel more connected to the

larger institution in very meaningful ways. Faculty must be informed. The Faculty Senate is working to insure that we are informed. Faculty must feel free to engage in discussions and debates about how we raise and invest our resources and how we work to build a great university. Faculty must realize ownership of our educational enterprise. We must confidently voice our thoughts and convictions in private meetings and public debates. And, administrators must be constantly reminded of the realities of our academic lives – our teaching, research, scholarship, creative expressions, issues of campus life – everything that sets us apart from other corporations and makes us an academic community. This connection between faculty and administrators – this shared investment in our social capital – is what has the potential to build our community into a great university.❖

-- **Susan E. Sadler**, Senate President 2000-2002



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