The Role of Faculty in Shared Governance

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"Shared governance" in higher education refers to structures and processes through which faculty, professional staff, administration, governing boards and, sometimes, students and staff participate in the development of policies and in decision-making that affect the institution.

There is no single model of shared governance. However, there is general agreement about the elements of effective shared governance. Such governance requires
- well-defined areas of authority that are the primary responsibilities of each of the governance components (i.e., faculty, administration, governing board, students, etc.);
- recognition that various areas are interrelated and that all components have a stake in the overall governance of the institution; and
- collegial and cooperative relationships among all components.

While the governing board of an institution of higher education has ultimate authority, the other components of the institutional governance structures should take the lead in areas of their expertise and their authority should be respected.

Most conceptions of shared governance recognize that faculty are best qualified and should therefore have a primary role, through a sound and well-established governance structure, in the formulation of policy relating to:
- Curriculum
- Methods of instruction
- Academic standards
- Academic student affairs
- Program development
- Degree requirements

Furthermore, faculty should have significant input, through their governance structure, into all other areas that affect the academic functions of the institution. This input should extend to areas that include, but are not limited to:
- Budget development
- Mission, planning (strategic and operational)
- Institutional Assessment
- Searches for key leaders
- Development of personnel policies and procedures
- Hiring and evaluation of faculty
- Awarding of promotions, sabbaticals and research support

While the administration and governing board of the institution are compelled to consider faculty resolutions and recommendations, they are not required to accept or implement them. However, rejection of resolutions or recommendations should occur rarely and then for specific compelling reasons which are communicated to the faculty governance structure that made them.

Shared Governance Resources

Selected resources (available online) that address the nature of shared governance:

❖ Governance bylaws of NYS Community Colleges at Faculty Council web site
  http://www.fccc.suny.edu/ccgovernance.html

❖ American Association of University Professors, "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities"
  http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/governancestatement.htm

❖ American Federation of Teachers, "Shared Governance in Colleges and Universities"
  http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/higher_ed/shared_governance.pdf
❖ American Federation of Teachers, brief policy statement on "Shared Governance".
  http://www.aft.org/topics/shared-governance/index.htm

❖ National Education Association, policy statement on "Faculty Governance in Higher Education"
  http://www2.nea.org/he/policy6.html
❖ National Education Association, policy "Statement on Community College Governance
  http://www2.nea.org/he/policy-cc.html

❖ Middle States Commission on Higher Education, "Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Eduction: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation"
  See Standard 4: Leadership and Governance
  http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX06_Aug08080728132708.pdf

❖ Education Commission of the States "Policy Paper on Shared Governance in Community Colleges"
  http://www.communitycollegepolicy.org/pdf/2265_Shared.pdf

Resources in print:

Edited volumes that consider current issues in shared governance
❖ Tierney, W.G. (Ed.). 2004. *Competing Concepts of Academic Governance: Negotiating the Perfect Storm.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

❖ Tierney, W.G. and Lechuga (Eds.). 2004. *Restructuring Shared Governance in Higher Education: New Directions for Higher Education No. 127.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.