

A Vision of Shared Governance for Pepperdine University

A great institution of higher learning is the product of the shared wisdom of multiple constituencies, all dedicated to academic excellence and to the proper and effective functioning of the institution.

Introduction

Pepperdine University's philosophy of institutional governance is grounded in the mission of the University, in the biblical mandate to treat others as we wish to be treated, in the very definition of the university as a "collegium"—that is, a society of colleagues, a fellowship—, and in the ethical expectations expressed in the University Code of Ethics. The Code states that: *"We value integrity, honesty, and fairness and strive to integrate these values into our daily practices.... We seek to be people who are honorable, forthright, and upright at all times.... We value people; we speak the truth; we have the courage of our convictions."*

Thus, transparency, collaboration, a shared sense of responsibility, and the free expression of ideas and concerns are intrinsic to our institutional culture. In brief, while our decision-making practices are complex and evolving, nonetheless, they are carried out within a particular Pepperdine culture founded on enduring values. That culture is shaped by the Christian faith, which inspires an ethos of care, respect, and the welcoming of vigorous debate. It is supported by the university's esteemed tradition of, and aspiration to, collegiality, open communication, mutual trust, and shared participation in a common life.

University Communities

The constituencies of a university are large, varied, and complex such that they could be called communities. They interact, evolve, and often overlap. Students become alumni who sometimes become university employees, donors, or even board members.

Most directly involved in ongoing governance are Regents, administrators with associated managers, and faculty. Regents have ultimate authority and responsibility.

As the chief executive officer, the president has the most responsibility and influence in setting the tone and practice of shared governance. Senior administrative leaders, the leaders of individual schools, and the leaders of individual academic units share in these governance responsibilities. They have the most responsibility and influence in determining budgets and (particularly at the university level) strategic priorities and selection of administrators.

Faculty members share a particular responsibility in governance. As unique bearers of institutional memory and culture, they advance the university mission through teaching, research and service. Collectively, members of the faculty have the most responsibility and influence in setting curriculum and educational policy, in selecting faculty, and in assessing student learning.

The broadest communities include donors, alumni, staff, students, and citizens of the city, state, and nation. Other communities include those near University campuses and facilities; they want good neighbors. Churches are concerned about the values of the University. The general

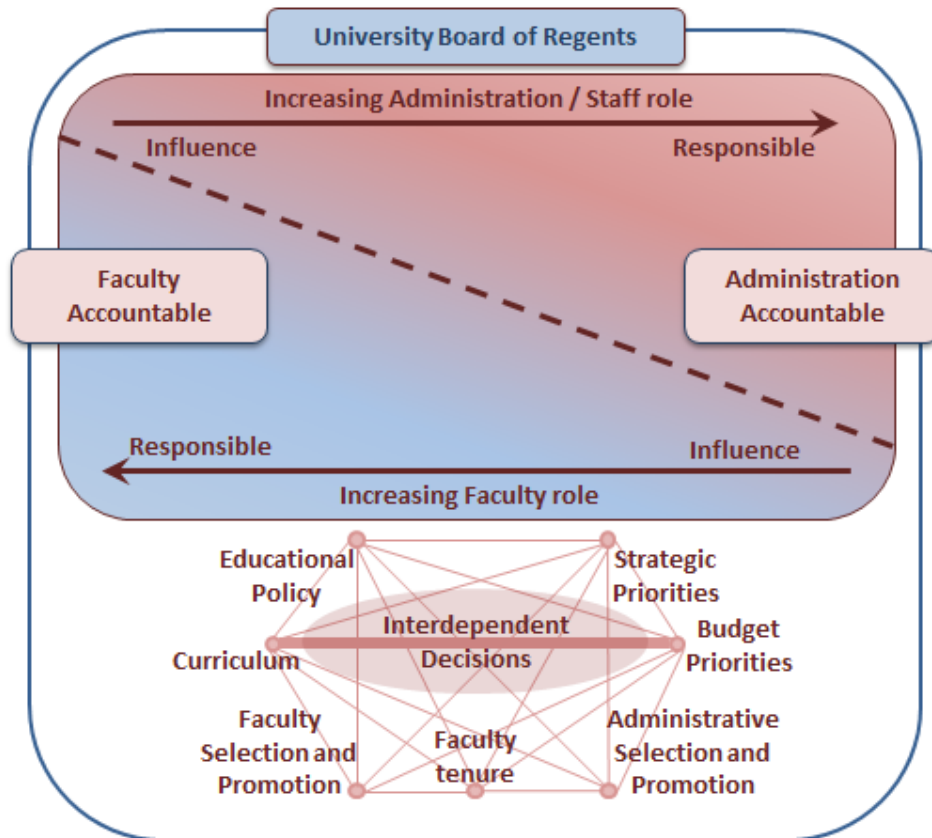
academic community cares about integrity and quality. All these may hold an interest in the University's wellbeing and mutually benefit from engagement.

An Informed, Responsive and Responsible University Community

Shared governance entails reasonable access to information, including the deliberations, recommendations, actions, and scope of authority of the institution's many committees, councils, and boards. Agenda items to be discussed are announced in a timely fashion, and the results of deliberations are appropriately posted.

Effective governance requires the active participation of faculty and administration. In this system of shared governance, faculty share decision making with the administration related to the mission and well-being of the institution. Hence, the role of faculty extends beyond teaching and research, to active participation in the stewardship of the university. Similarly, the administration leads in promoting an environment of open communication, establishing multiple avenues of consultation which lead to informed decisions concerning the institution's direction. Effective shared governance is predicated upon faculty and administration developing a shared vision of the university and working jointly toward its implementation. It requires a similar joint effort at the school level between each school's faculty and administration.

A Model of Shared Governance



Shared institutional governance is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon requiring a high commitment on behalf of the stakeholders to ensure its realization. Perhaps never fully achieved, it exists as a delicate interdependence of structure, process, trust, communication, commitment, and engagement. The figure above illustrates a spectrum of common decisions for which authority is delegated by the University Board of Regents to administrators, faculty, and staff. Accountable decision makers must proactively engage appropriate stakeholders to inform, consult, recommend, or determine suitable alternatives for consideration. Rarely is a decision so exceptional that it can be made independent of other factors or others participating in governance. The shared governance model recognizes the interdependent nature of institutional challenges and opportunities. For example, budget priorities affect the curriculum that can be offered; educational policy must influence the setting of strategic priorities. The challenge of shared governance is to acknowledge the complex and dynamic nature of the decisions and roles, to incorporate transparency in decision-making to the extent feasible, to recognize that any of the interdependent characteristics are necessary but not sufficient, and that it is an ongoing process of learning and developing.

The University Faculty Council (UFC) has served, and will continue to serve, an important but nonexclusive role in that process at the university level. Administrators and faculty who serve on university committees engage in that ongoing process as they work out their respective roles. At the school level, faculty and administrators are committed to engage in it as well, so that our shared governance vision will be more than a vision – so that it will be implemented in concrete ways. To that end, faculty at each school will determine shared governance concerns to be discussed with their administrations, and school level administrators similarly may identify concerns to be discussed with their faculties. Administrators and faculty at each school are encouraged to document their understandings of shared governance, including the particular ways in which it will be implemented. Faculty representatives to the UFC are free, under the terms of the UFC Charter, to bring such concerns with regard to their own schools to the UFC for discussion.

With mutual responsibility for shared governance comes a culture that seeks to nourish the values of excellence and academic freedom which are the hallmarks of a successful institution of higher learning.

*Approved by University Faculty Council
March 26, 2014*