

Improving Shared Governance on Your Campus

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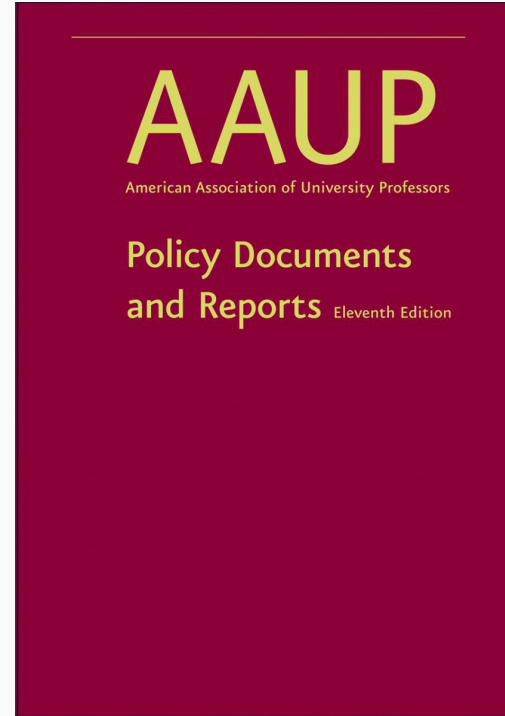
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Topics

1. The AAUP and Institutional Governance
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3. The Role of the Faculty
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The AAUP and Institutional Governance

“A university is a great and indispensable organ of the higher life of a civilized community, in the work of which **the trustees hold an essential and highly honorable place, but in which the faculties hold an independent place, with quite equal responsibilities – and in relation to purely scientific and educational questions, the primary responsibility.**”

— AAUP’s 1915 *Declaration of Principles*

The AAUP and Institutional Governance

*“Shared academic governance has been under severe pressure since the onset of the pandemic. Though it would be premature to say that we have entered a new era of institutional governance in advance of what some observers are calling ‘the great contraction’ in American higher education, the evidence already before us suggests that this has been a **watershed moment**. There is no question that many colleges and universities are in financial distress, and many more will face daunting challenges in the next decade. **The question is whether robust shared governance will survive those challenges.** For that to happen, governing boards, administrations, and faculties must make a conscious, concerted, and sustained effort to ensure that all parties are conversant with, and cultivate respect for, the norms of shared governance as articulated in the *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*.”*

— [*Special Report: COVID-19 and Academic Governance*](#) (2021)

The AAUP and Institutional Governance

- The authoritative formulation of principles of academic governance is set forth in the 1966 [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#).
- The statement was jointly formulated with the AGB and the ACE, and each group commended it to its members.
- The AGB recently affirmed that “specific reference” to the *Statement on Government* “in the institution’s governing documents is an important foundation” for the institutional commitment to shared governance.

Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities



Calls for **adequate communication, shared responsibility, and joint planning and effort** among the components of institutional government, and specifies **areas of primary responsibility** for governing boards, administrations, and faculties, because “[t]he variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students, and others.”



Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities



- Appropriate joint planning and effort requires participation **depending on the degree of responsibility:**
- “...differences in the weight of each voice, from one point to the next, should be determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand...”



Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities



Recommends “joint” governance because

“a college or university in which all the components are aware of their **interdependence**, of the usefulness of **communication** among themselves, and of **the force of joint action** will enjoy increased capacity to **solve educational problems.**”



Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities



- Appropriate joint planning and effort means **all** components get to participate:

“...important areas of action involve at one time or another the initiating capacity and decision-making participation of all the institutional components...”



Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities



- Appropriate joint planning and effort requires participation **depending on the degree of responsibility:**

“...differences in the weight of each voice, from one point to the next, should be determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand...”



Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities



The *Statement* articulates the roles of three components:

- Governing Board
- President
- The Faculty



On the Role of the Faculty

Essentially, the faculty has responsibility (voice and decision-making authority) for matters in proportion to the degree of their expert knowledge.

Therefore...

On the Role of the Faculty

“The faculty has **primary responsibility** for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process.”

“Faculty status and related matters are **primarily a faculty responsibility**; this area includes appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal.”

What does “primary responsibility” mean?

- “On these matters the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated by it to the president should **be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty.** It is desirable that the faculty should, following such communication, have opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the president or board.”

What does “primary responsibility” mean?

- In areas of faculty primacy, boards and presidents should “concur with faculty judgment **except in rare instances** and for **compelling reasons** which should be **stated in detail.**”

Why should the faculty voice be authoritative in the academic area?

- Faculty are uniquely qualified to exercise decision-making authority in their areas of expertise.
- “[S]cholars in a particular field or activity have the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues.”
- The faculty’s “judgment is central to general educational policy.”

Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities



- In areas where the faculty doesn't have primary responsibility, the faculty still participates in decision-making. These areas include:
 - Long range (strategic) planning
 - Physical plant
 - Budget
 - Hiring and evaluation of administrators



On Communication

Structures for communication among the faculty, administration, and governing board should exist and “be clearly understood and observed.”

Faculty Communication with Governing Board

Every standing committee of the governing board, including the executive committee, should include a faculty representative.

Direct communication between the faculty and the governing board should occur through a liaison or conference committee consisting only of faculty members and trustees and meeting regularly to discuss topics of mutual interest.

Essence of the Traditional Conception of Governance

- All voices are **not** equal in institutional governance.
- The faculty exercises “primary responsibility” in areas of expert knowledge.
- Administration/board normally concur with faculty recommendations regarding areas where faculty have primary responsibility.

Essence of the Traditional Conception of Governance

- In other words, in academic matters, a faculty decision should normally be a final decision.
- In other words, administration/board should maintain a hands-off policy with regard to any academic matter: curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, academic policies, appointment, reappointment, non-reappointment, tenure, promotion, etc.

Steps Faculty Can Take to Strengthen Shared Governance



Analyze the governance structure on your campus. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current system?

Compare your governance structure with the standards set forth in the *Statement on Government* and other AAUP statements.

Compare your governance structure with those of institutions known for good practices.



Steps Faculty Can Take to Strengthen Shared Governance



Develop a plan. Decide whether to attempt an overall redoing of your governance system or to attack it piecemeal.

Hold public forums on governance with both campus and outside speakers.

Seek opportunities to discuss governance with your administration and governing board.

Make sure standing faculty committees exist for all key areas that involve academic decisions.



Steps Faculty Can Take to Strengthen Shared Governance



Question the advisability of mixed committees in areas of faculty primacy.

Avoid the use of ad-hoc committees (“task forces”), especially those established unilaterally by the administration and/or the governing board.

Make sure faculty appointments to all committees are made by faculty.

Get involved in writing accreditation self-studies, especially the governance sections.



Steps Faculty Can Take to Strengthen Shared Governance



Question the use of confidentiality agreements as a condition for participation in shared governance.

Question the use of “closed searches” for administrators.

Establish expectations for conduct of faculty representatives: at a minimum, faculty representatives need to inform their constituents, and seek input from their constituents.



Steps Faculty Can Take to Strengthen Shared Governance



Establish shared governance at all levels of the university—department, college/school, and university.

Seek the advice of the AAUP national staff and AAUP officers at both the national and state level.

Work closely with the AAUP chapter leadership.

Encourage others—especially individuals from groups underrepresented in governance activities—to participate in governance.



Steps an AAUP Chapter Can Take to Strengthen Shared Governance



Promote AAUP governance standards by

maintaining a website and publishing a newsletter;

communicating with the administration and board;

sponsoring meetings and holding forums; and

administering a governance survey (see the AAUP's [Shared Governance Assessment Tool](#)).



Steps an AAUP Chapter Can Take to Strengthen Shared Governance



Promote AAUP governance standards by

advocating for regular evaluation of administrators;

supporting and cooperating with faculty governance bodies;

holding faculty governance bodies accountable; and

getting chapter members involved in faculty governance.



Thank you!

[Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#)

[Faculty Communication with Governing Boards: Best Practices](#)

[Confidentiality and Faculty Representation in Academic Governance](#)

[The Role of the Faculty in Budgetary and Salary Matters](#)

[On the Relationship of Faculty Governance to Academic Freedom](#)

[AAUP Principles and Standards for the COVID-19 Crisis](#)

[AGB Board of Directors' Statement on Shared Governance \(2017\)](#)

Thank you!

If you have questions or need assistance, please send an email message to academicfreedom@aaup.org or visit the AAUP's [governance resources page](#).