



FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION

FSR-2021-2022-04

Faculty Handbook & Academic Affairs

I. Resolution Name:

Faculty Senate Definition of ‘Shared Governance’

II. Stated Resolution

Shared governance is a norm that governs procedures for equitable, responsible, and effective decision-making involving all members of the university community (governing boards, administration, faculty, staff, and, where appropriate, students and alumni). Shared governance acknowledges the distinct domains of authority and responsibility among different groups within the university, while also promoting a culture of cooperative decision-making in which all relevant parties can share their expertise, perspectives, and values in order to work together to more effectively promote the shared mission and vision of the university. A decision-making process that respects the norm of shared governance will be a transparent, inclusive, collaborative, and respectful process.

III. Background & Justification:

The importance of shared governance results from the fact that responsibility and accountability for university activities is distributed across different domains:

- The Board of Regents of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSHRE) and the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) have the ultimate legal responsibility for university management (FH 1.3.3);
- Administration, led by the President and Cabinet, are delegated responsibility for daily operations and internal administration from the Regents (FH 1.3.3.2, 1.4.2), and have oversight over vision and strategic leadership, as well as fiscal management and operations;
- Staff implement university operations, policies, and procedures and maintain day-to-day university operations, as well as other issues related student services, and student welfare;
- Faculty oversee teaching, research, curriculum, assessment, student support, faculty welfare, faculty personnel policies - including tenure and promotion – and university-wide budget and strategic planning relating to those and other concerns. (FH Appendix B Article III.B)

The UCO Faculty Association and the UCO Faculty Senate were both established by RUSO in recognition of the need to involve faculty in university governance (FH 1.7), and

to recognize the vital role faculty play in shared governance (FH Appendix B Preamble). It is part of each faculty member's specific responsibilities to accept a reasonable share of faculty responsibility for the governance of the institution (FH 2.3.2). The Faculty Handbook further states, in recognition of the unique role faculty play in the function of a university, that the UCO Faculty Senate "shall actively participate in the academic policy and decision-making process at UCO". Compliance with the Faculty Handbook and other university policies therefore requires active participation in shared governance by faculty, both individually as members of the Faculty Association and jointly as represented by Faculty Senate.

Moreover, the university mission, is that "UCO exists to help students learn by providing transformative educational experiences to students so that they may become productive, creative, ethical and engaged citizens and leaders serving our global community" (FH 1.2.1). It is further stated that "UCO's fundamental responsibility is excellent teaching" (FH 1.2.2). Insofar as this goal is centered on student learning, and student learning falls primarily within the domain of academic programs, curriculum, and pedagogy, university faculty bear a special responsibility in realizing the university's mission: "faculty create meaningful learning environments" (FH 1.2.2.2). University faculty must therefore take an especially prominent role in making decisions which affect the operation of the university.

Each group within the university has its own primary area of responsibility with distinct fields of expertise across which authority and accountability are distributed. Moreover, each group has unique perspective and insights into its domain that may not be obvious or appreciated from other vantages. It is therefore appropriate that the difference in the weight of each group's voice on a particular issue should be determined by the extent of its responsibility for and expertise on that issue. Shared governance means, in part, that each group within the university is responsible for its share of the decision-making and management process, and that these differences should be respected by the other members of the university.

However, none of the groups within the university can perform their role successfully without the cooperation and effective operation of the others, because each domain is integrated with and dependent on the others. No unit can operate in isolation, and decisions made by one group will have consequences for the others; the success of the university requires each group to perform well individually and for each group to work effectively with the others. Hence shared governance also means, in part, that the overall management of the university is a responsibility jointly shared by all parties.

Shared governance requires clear and constant communication between all levels of the university. In particular, shared governance requires that the appropriate stakeholders are consulted before decisions are made, so that they may share information relevant to those decisions which may not be obvious or fully appreciated by other groups within the university. It also requires communication during and after decisions are made, so that decision-makers are kept informed about the implementation and effectiveness of these decisions.

Shared governance is instrumental for effective decision-making and implementation. Without it, the university risks making decisions without being fully informed of the costs, trade-offs, and consequences of these decisions. Shared governance can reduce

miscommunications and redundancies between units of the university, and can leverage on-the-ground knowledge to avoid missteps and pitfalls in implementation. Shared governance leads to smoother implementation, more productive use of time and resources, and greater buy-in by those carrying out university decisions and those affected by them.

Moreover, shared governance improves morale at all levels of the university and fosters a culture of dignity and mutual respect. In an environment shaped by shared governance, members of the university feel valued as informed and engaged partners in a cooperative enterprise. No organization can expect complete unanimity in its decision-making, but shared governance helps individuals not only feel like part of the process, but also have a more informed sense of the larger context, constraints, and competing priorities that guide university policies. This leads to more satisfaction with specific decisions (even in the face of residual disagreements), more trust in the decision-making process, and more rapport between members of the university.

Submitted by the Faculty Handbook and Academic Affairs Committee.

Recommended for Approval by the Faculty Handbook and Academic Affairs Committee.

PASSED *UNANIMOUSLY* ON 14 APRIL 2022.



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