



FAQs on Shared Governance

What is shared governance?

Shared governance refers to the joint responsibility of faculty, administrations, and governing boards to govern colleges and universities. Differences 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.

What is the role of the faculty in shared governance?

The role of the faculty is to have primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. The responsibility for faculty status includes appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal. The faculty should also have a role in decision-making outside of their immediate areas of primary responsibility, including long-term planning, budgeting, and the selection, evaluation and retention of administrators.

How should the faculty be involved in governance?

Institutions may require different governance procedures depending on their size and character. In any case, there should be a body responsible for presenting the views of the faculty as a whole, and the design and approval of the structure of faculty participation should involve joint action of the faculty, administration, and governing board. However, faculty representatives should be selected not by the board or administration but by the faculty, according to procedures determined by the faculty. With a few exceptions in personnel matters, faculty representatives should be free to share information with and seek input from their colleagues without the constraints of confidentiality agreements.

What is the role of the administration?

The role of the administration, led by the president, is to ensure that the operation of the institution conforms to the policies set forth by the governing board and to sound academic practice, to provide institutional

leadership, to make sure there is effective communication between components of the institution, and to represent the institution to its many publics.

What is the role of the governing board?

The role of the governing board is to ensure that the institution stays true to its mission, to play a major role in ensuring that the institution has the financial resources it needs to operate successfully, to possess final decision-making authority, and to entrust the conduct of administration to the administrative officers.

Why should the faculty voice be authoritative in the academic area? Why shouldn't presidents and boards just make the decisions?

Faculty have special training and knowledge that make them distinctly qualified to exercise decision-making authority in their areas of expertise. And they are best qualified to judge the competence and effectiveness of fellow faculty members.

Even though the president and board may possess final authority, they should routinely concur with faculty recommendations made in areas of faculty responsibility and should reject faculty decisions in those areas only in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail. In short, when it comes to academic matters, a faculty decision should normally be the final decision.

Why should students and the community care about shared governance?

Allowing faculty to make academic decisions ensures that those decisions are informed by educational and academic considerations, not just the bottom line.

In the plain words of one of the twentieth century's great university presidents, "we get the best results in education and research if we leave their management to people who know something about them" (Robert Maynard Hutchins, *Higher Learning in America*, Yale, 1936, p. 21).

Where did the concept of shared governance come from; who made these rules?

The classic conception of shared governance was articulated in the [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#) (where it is referred to as "joint effort"). This statement was jointly formulated by the Association of Governing Boards of American Colleges and Universities (AGB), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the AAUP, and the standards it lays out are widespread in higher education. However, they are best practices, not regulations. Your administration may use the phrase "shared governance" to mean something entirely different--often shared governance is used to convey the idea that a lot of conversation ought to take place before administrators or boards make the final decision.

Where can I find out more?

The [Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#) remains the AAUP's central policy document relating to academic governance. It has been supplemented over the years by a series of derivative policy statements, including those on faculty governance and academic freedom; budgetary and salary matters; financial exigency; the selection, evaluation, and retention of administrators; college athletics; governance

and collective bargaining; and the faculty status of college and university librarians. You can find all this and more at <https://www.aaup.org/our-programs/shared-governance>.