

Report of the Siena Shared Governance Task Force

July 11 2025

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I. Shared Governance Philosophy Statement

Siena is a learning community, advancing the ideals of a liberal arts education, rooted in its identity as a Franciscan and Catholic institution. Shared governance practices must be structured to promote and enhance the University's mission and goals. These practices will ensure that all stakeholders are informed, consulted, and have an opportunity to discuss major decisions and policies; that the appropriate individuals, groups, and committees make recommendations based on their expertise; and that these are considered in good faith by the ultimate decision maker.

A system of shared governance where all relevant stakeholders have a voice, either directly or indirectly through committee representation, promotes a free exchange of ideas that expands the menu of options available to decision makers and improves overall decision quality. This can help to ensure that all perspectives are considered when making decisions. Each campus stakeholder group—faculty, administration, staff, the president, the Board of Trustees, and students—has responsibility in the area of its expertise, and decision-making authority flows from that responsibility.

Shared governance at Siena is guided by the following principles:

Communication and Transparency: Decision-making and recommendations should be transparent, and based on best practices and available information. This process should be communicated regularly to all stakeholders and provide an opportunity for community input. The rationale, methodology, and process used in deliberations should be made clear to all affected parties and these parties should have opportunities to provide input in a timely manner.

Representation and Influence: The degree to which a group influences a decision should reflect how strongly the decision impacts them. This dialogue and good-faith discussion between all affected parties is central to the Catholic social tradition and Franciscan values. The degree to which each voice is heard and considered should reflect not only how much a group is affected, but also who has ultimate responsibility for the decision. However, very few decisions are purely democratic. Financial decisions are entrusted to the Board of Trustees; administrative and policy-related decisions are entrusted to the president, cabinet, and relevant vice presidents or directors; while curricular decisions and methods of instruction are entrusted to the faculty.

Inclusivity and Equity: Different groups within our community may have unique interests, concerns, and objectives. Inclusive and equitable shared governance acknowledges and respects these differences. All stakeholders have a responsibility to honor these differences when making decisions.

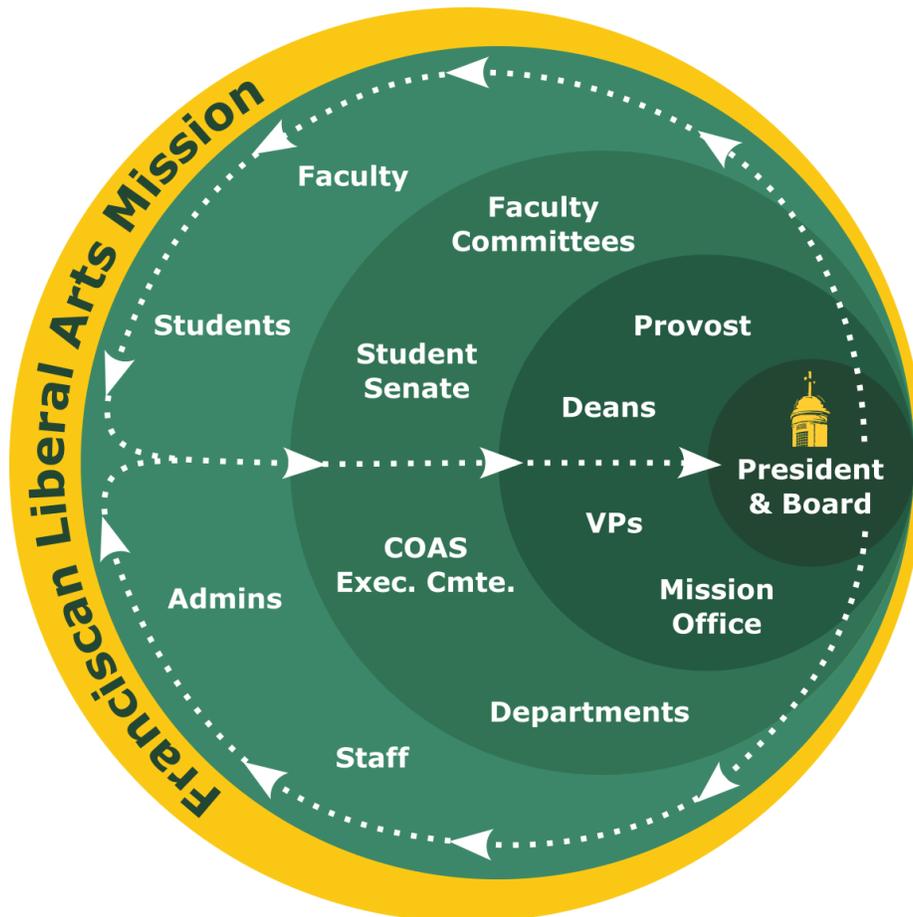
Expertise and Partnership: Decisions and recommendations should be made by individuals or groups with the greatest relevant expertise. The decisions universities face are varied, complex, and interdependent between different groups. Thus, unilateral

decisions can lead to confusion, conflict, and delay. Relying on the expertise of individuals, groups, and committees, coupled with the solicitation of input from affected stakeholders, can improve the efficacy of the decision-making process without sacrificing inclusivity.

Accountability and Responsibility: Each community member has a responsibility to participate in discussions, recommendations, and decision-making in good faith; and each is responsible for advocating for decisions that are in the best interest of the stakeholders affected and the University community as a whole.

Authority and Respect: Since the decision-making process can be complex and involve inputs from multiple constituents, all stakeholders must acknowledge that the final authority for making a decision ultimately rests with the appropriate and designated individuals, groups, and/or committees. When best practices are used and all stakeholders act in good faith, final decisions should further the long-term sustainability and health of the University and be respected by community members.

Shared governance is not simply about the processes of decision-making; it goes to the very core of our mission. Shared governance is the mechanism by which we, as a Franciscan community, apply our values to solving problems that maintain the mission, objectives, and long-term health of the University.



II. Overview of Task Force Composition and Activities

The Shared Governance Task Force was initially suggested by the Governance working group of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education reaccreditation self-study. The self-study report affirmed Siena's commitment to Shared Governance as defined in the 1966 Joint Statement of the AAUP, ACE, and AGB. It praised recent progress in strengthening shared governance on campus, most notably by expanding the President's Cabinet to include the Deans (as of 2014) and the Faculty Chair (as of 2020). The self-study also identified room for further improvement, especially regarding the community's collective understanding of what shared governance means, writing "While shared governance is practiced across the College, a universal definition is lacking."¹ An early draft of the report recommended forming a task force to study and strengthen shared governance on campus. President Seifert took office in the summer of 2023, and one of his first actions was to establish this task force. Thus, by the time the self-study was finalized in 2024, the task force's work was already underway.

The charge of the task force, taken directly from the draft self-study that suggested it, was:

A college-wide task force should be established to develop a shared definition, decision-making model and shared governance process.

It should consist of representatives from the board, faculty, administration, staff, and students, and should be formed in consultation with the Board Chair, President, Provost and Senior Vice President, and Faculty Chair.

It is important that the task force be diverse, representing a range of years of experience, levels of responsibility, divisions of the college, and stakeholder groups.

The task force should follow the strategic planning process and consult with the wider community, soliciting feedback regularly.

Once recommendations are complete, they should be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval, and the President should be responsible for implementing the approved plan.

This Taskforce should be formed during the Fall of 2023 and target their report for Spring 2025.

In fulfillment of this charge, the task force was composed of representatives from all major stakeholder groups on campus:

¹ [Siena College MSCHE 2024 Self-Study](#), p. 93

Membership of the Shared Governance Task Force

Co-Chair, Chair of the General Faculty Committee	Sarah Berke
Co-Chair, 2023-24 Chair of the Council of Administrators and Staff	Kelly O'Donnell
Trustee	Patty Nashelsky
Trustee	John Held
Provost	Maggie Madden
Dean, School of Liberal Arts	Chris Farnan
Director of the Library	Vicki Parsons
Chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee	Len Cutler
School of Business Representative	Aaron Pacitti
School of Liberal Arts Representative	Annie Rody-Wright
School of Science Representative	Tom Giarla
Council of Administrators and Staff Representative (and Council of Administrators and Staff Chair 2024-25)	Alicia Pepe
Administrators' Representative	Allison Turcio
Staff Representative	Lisa Simmons
Athletics Representative	Drew Santandera
Student Representatives (student senate officers, this position has turned over with senate elections)	Luke Keith (2023-24); Emily Atassi (2023-24); McKayla Regan (2024-25); Kerry Wise (2025)

The task force first convened in December 2023, and thereafter met monthly or bimonthly for the duration of our work. Our activities can be described by the following timeline:

- Fall 2023
 - Established membership and charge
 - Identified deliverables
 - Established timeline
 - First full meeting

- Spring 2024
 - Developed our own understanding of shared governance. We read and discussed numerous articles and surveys regarding shared governance, seeking out a diversity of perspectives representing faculty, administration, board, and staff viewpoints. Many of these are now available on Siena's Shared Governance website:
<https://www.siena.edu/offices/oie/accreditation/msche-self-study-2024/shared-governance-task-force/>
 - Completed the AAUP's Shared Governance [Self-Assessment Tool](#).
 - Engaged in extensive group work to articulate the links between shared governance and institutional outcomes. This was inspired by an AGB white paper² on shared governance, which emphasized the importance of clearly linking shared governance processes to better institutional outcomes. This work ultimately resulted in the 'Institutional Outcomes' section of this report.
 - Collected and reviewed sample shared governance documents from other schools.
 - Engaged the Siena community in our work by sharing the task force's charge and activities at multiple faculty meetings, school meetings, and Council of Administrators and Staff meetings.
 - Distributed a questionnaire to solicit community feedback about shared governance successes and challenges at Siena.

- Summer 2024
 - Began drafting the Decision Matrix.
 - Reviewed feedback from the community questionnaire, plus additional documents, to better understand community perceptions regarding shared governance at Siena, challenges around shared governance at Siena, and perceptions of and challenges around shared governance at other schools.
 - Read and discussed responses to the spring shared governance questionnaire, open responses to the 2024 faculty satisfaction survey, a 2024 report from the American Council on Education and the Huron Group on their [shared governance survey](#), and the 2016 AAUP report censuring the [College of Saint Rose](#) for violations of tenure and academic freedom.

² Association of Governing Boards 2017. [Shared Governance: Changing with the Times](#).

- This work was shared with the full task force through discussion and a written report, portions of which have now been incorporated into this report.
- Fall 2024
 - Extensively discussed and revised the Decision Matrix
 - Drafted the Philosophy Statement
 - Established an outline for the final report
- Spring 2025
 - Shared the Philosophy Statement and Decision Matrix drafts with President Seifert, Cabinet, General Faculty Committee, the Council of Administrators and Staff Executive Committee, and the Board's Governance Committee for feedback (Jan - March).
 - Drafted the report.
 - Shared a penultimate draft of all deliverables with the entire Siena community for feedback (April), which has now been incorporated (May-June)
 - Shared the final report with President Seifert in July 2025.

The Decision Matrix and the Final Report and Recommendations from the Task Force, once it is completed, will be submitted to the complete Board for its approval.

III. Introduction: What is Shared Governance?

Universities are special institutions. By equal measure, they are teachers of future citizens, crucibles of scientific advancement, and havens for the arts. They are intellectual homes for scholars and physical homes for young people. And they are businesses with accounts to manage, bills to pay, and buildings to maintain.

How do universities balance being hubs of research, homes for students, and financial institutions all at once?

The answer is shared governance, the decision-making model used by most colleges and universities in the United States. Shared governance ensures key stakeholders — faculty, administrators, students, trustees — play a role in guiding the institution. The concept first took hold in the mid 1940s and was formally defined in the 1966 *Joint Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*³, coauthored by the American Association of University Professors, the Association of Governing Boards, and the American Council on Education.

The Joint Statement hinges on three major principles: expertise, responsibility, and authority. Authority to make decisions flows from responsibility in the area of the decision. Responsibility in turn flows from expertise – those with expertise in an area typically have responsibility in that area. It also recognizes five main stakeholders on campus: faculty, staff and administrators, students, the President, and the Board of Trustees, who perform these critical functions:

- The President sets a vision for the institution at the highest level. Their responsibilities include serving as the public face of the University, managing resources, generating new resources, and managing non-academic operations.
- Faculty, as experts in their disciplinary fields of expertise and teaching, shape curriculum and instruction, ensuring a high-quality educational experience.
- Board members, as experts in governance and fiduciary stewardship, provide strategic direction to ensure the University's long-term sustainability.
- Administrators and staff, as experts in institutional management, implement policies, allocate resources, and ensure effective operations.
- The Friars' expertise in our Franciscan mission and values reinforces our identity and guides our decision-making. Some Friars also serve in administrative positions and/or sit on the faculty.
- Students play a vital role by providing their unique perspectives on issues that impact their academic and community experience ensuring that policies and procedures reflect their needs and concerns.

³ AAUP, "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities," AAUP, 1966, <https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-government-colleges-and-universities>.

Ultimately, the Board of Trustees “operates, with few exceptions, as the final institutional authority.”³ That said, however, the Joint Statement enjoins Trustees to “undertake appropriate self-limitation” by entrusting administration to the president, provost and deans, and by entrusting teaching and research to the faculty.

The Joint Statement also recognizes areas of joint responsibility:

“The variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students, and others.... 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. ...

The interests of all are coordinated and related, and unilateral effort can lead to confusion or conflict. ...

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”

The principle that the people with the greatest stake in a decision ought to have the most participation in making it aligns closely with Catholic social tradition. All parties must come to the table in good faith, with open eyes, open ears, and deep respect for each others’ expertise — “in solidarity, as brothers and sisters, dedicated to our mission and capable of the work before us”⁴. Shared Governance is not simply about the processes of decision-making at Siena; it goes to the very core of our mission. It is the mechanism by which we, as a Franciscan community, apply our values to solving problems.

Shared governance is built on simple principles, but it requires constant effort, including active participation, exhaustive communication, willingness to hear criticism, and a deep commitment to a process that may sometimes feel frustrating. The challenge is worth it. Effective shared governance strengthens our institution, fosters collaboration, and ensures all voices contribute to our shared mission.

⁴ Pope Francis, "Address during Visit to the Community at Varginha", July 25, 2013, as cited in Sharpe, Susan, "Restorative Justice and Catholic Social Tradition: A Natural Alignment", March 2018.

IV. Linking Shared Governance to Institutional Outcomes

Our commitment to shared governance is closely aligned with our Franciscan values, but we do not practice shared governance solely because it is Franciscan. ***We practice shared governance because it is the best way to ensure that decisions are wise and enduring.*** Fundamentally, decision-makers need all possible information in order to make a good decision. They obtain information by consulting and taking recommendations from those with expertise in the problem at hand, through shared governance processes. Thus, there is a direct link between shared governance and good outcomes. In this section, we elaborate on the ways that shared governance contributes to six key institutional outcomes: advancing our mission, student success, strengthening our reputation, ensuring a positive employee experience, strategic planning, and improving our long-term financial outlook.

Advancing Siena's Mission

Ultimately, everything we do at Siena is driven by our Franciscan mission. These values challenge us to be accountable for and transparent in our actions, communicate respectfully, and work collaboratively with all stakeholders to benefit the common good. Shared governance provides the mechanism by which we can collectively ensure that the mission is fulfilled and advanced in all key institutional decisions.

When we practice shared governance, we are “living our faith in action.”⁵ The principles of shared governance resonate deeply with Catholic social justice, particularly the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. In the Catholic tradition, solidarity means striving towards common goals through open communication, mutual respect, and steadfast support of one another. Solidarity hinges on communication and transparency: without trust in each other, collective action and progress would falter. The Catholic principle of subsidiarity means that those who are most affected by a situation should have the greatest voice in addressing it. When we give all stakeholders a voice in decision-making, even those less commonly at the table, better decisions result. Trust is earned, respect is felt, and no one feels that they are “useless” or “expendable”⁶. This empowers stakeholders to embrace their responsibility and commitment to Siena and its mission. Furthermore, when all stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process, leaders are challenged to communicate and act with transparency, honesty, and good faith. This helps to hold leaders accountable. Open dialogue, the unfettered sharing of information, and the opportunity for all to provide input are critical components of shared governance.

⁵ Sharpe, S. (2018, March). *Restorative Justice and Catholic Social Tradition: A Natural Alignment*. The Restorative Justice Network of Catholic Campuses (RJNCC). <https://www.sandiego.edu/soles/documents/restorative-justice/RJ-and-Catholic-Social-Tradition.pdf> .

⁶ Pope Francis (2020). *Fratelli Tutti* 215.

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

When the concepts of solidarity and subsidiarity are authentically practiced in shared governance, a culture of mutual respect, quintessential to achieving the common good, is sustained.

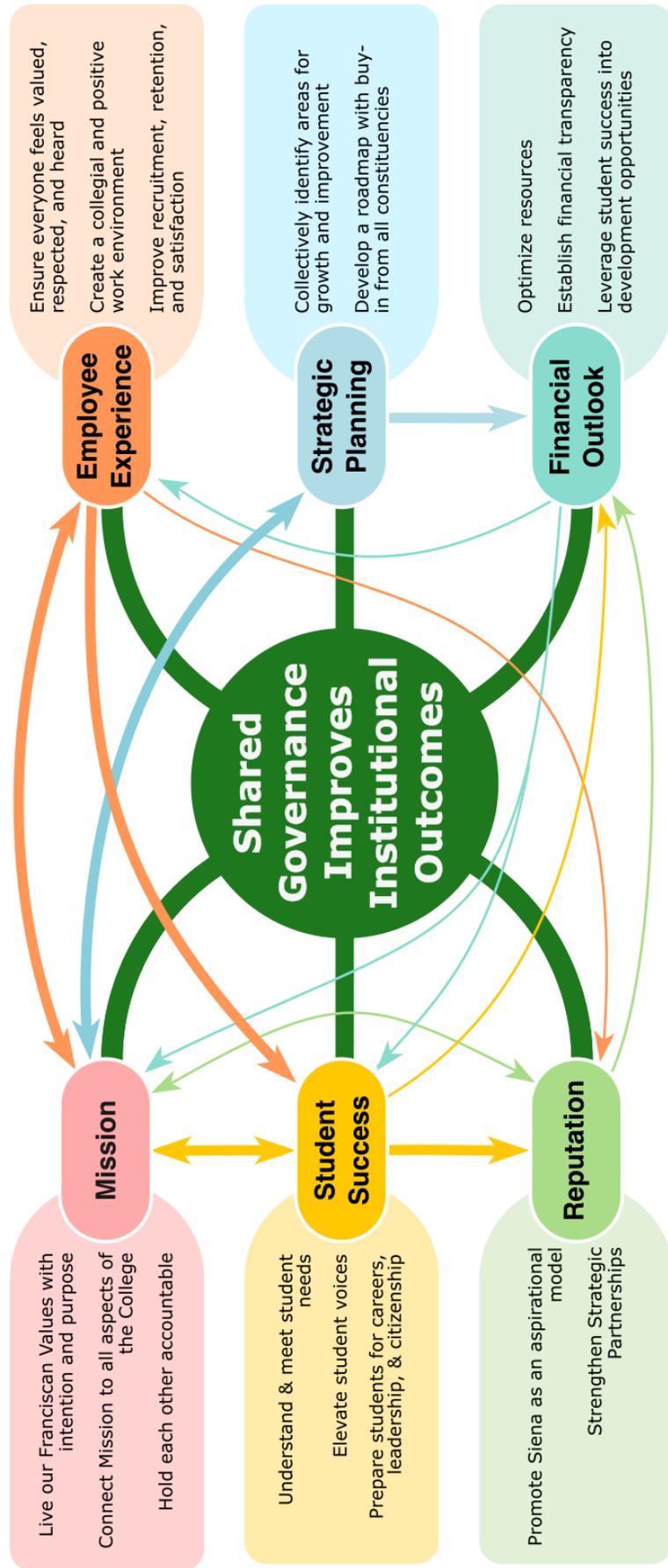
Student Success

Shared governance ensures student success by allowing students, faculty, and staff to actively bring student concerns to the table, leading to policies and practices that are aligned with the needs of the student body. Students know best what academic, mental health, technological, and community support they need to thrive. Shared governance can facilitate the development of targeted support services for students with diverse needs, as different perspectives are considered in decision-making. Giving students a voice empowers them and encourages their collaboration to work towards common goals. This gives students a sense of ownership over their education, creating a supportive learning environment that considers and respects diverse perspectives. Ultimately, shared governance improves the overall quality of education and student outcomes.

While students should have a direct voice in shared governance, student interests are also a primary concern for faculty and for staff/administrators in student-facing roles. By including these stakeholders in shared decision-making process, administrators gain valuable insights into student interests and challenges. Shared governance is key to ensuring that we send wise citizens and leaders out into the world, contributing their voices and actions to the common good.

Reputation

A well-structured shared governance model strengthens Siena's standing in multiple ways. It demonstrates an institutional commitment to community engagement, making Siena an attractive partner for businesses and local governments. These relationships support job placements and internships, reinforcing the University's dedication to student success. Additionally, shared governance enhances marketing efforts by ensuring a unified understanding of institutional strengths, which, in turn, improves public perception and differentiates Siena from competitors. A strong reputation also plays a key role in faculty recruitment, as institutions recognized for collaborative governance are more likely to attract high-caliber educators and researchers. Stability and transparency in decision-making further bolster donor confidence. This leads to greater financial support that advances Siena's mission and resources.



Heavy arrows show direct impacts of shared governance; thin arrows show feedbacks between outcomes

Employee Experience

Shared governance is integral to shaping a positive workplace culture on campus. It empowers employees by giving them a voice in critical institutional matters, such as policies (e.g., the Faculty Handbook) and compensation structures (e.g., the Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee). This inclusivity fosters a culture of respect and engagement, strengthening trust among faculty, staff, and administrators. A collaborative decision-making process also nurtures collegiality and reinforces a shared sense of purpose. Furthermore, participation in governance allows employees to apply their expertise in meaningful ways, develop leadership skills, and contribute to institutional progress.

By fully embracing shared governance, Siena not only enhances its reputation as a distinguished institution but also fosters an environment where employees feel valued and engaged. This commitment to transparency and collaboration ultimately attracts prospective students, faculty, and donors—driving long-term success for the institution.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning at Siena represents the core tenets of our shared governance principles. An effective strategic plan cannot emerge from siloed decision-making; rather, it must integrate the expertise and perspectives of the entire community. A collaborative approach to strategic planning not only improves the quality of the initiatives, but creates greater community investment in their successful implementation.

The strategic planning process is inclusive and participatory. By engaging faculty, staff, administrators, students, and trustees in meaningful dialogue, the University can harness a diversity of viewpoints, identify blind spots, generate innovative initiatives, and build consensus around institutional priorities. This aligns with the principle that those most affected by decisions should have the greatest opportunity to shape them. Faculty input is essential for academic initiatives, staff expertise is crucial for operational improvements, student feedback is vital for enhancing the collegiate experience, and administrative guidance ensures alignment with institutional mission and resources.

The strategic planning process highlights the critical role of shared governance at Siena: collaborative problem-solving that honors the expertise and needs of different stakeholders, while advancing our Franciscan mission. A collaborative approach can allow the University to develop innovative strategies and create a culture of commitment necessary for their successful implementation.

Financial Outlook

Financial stewardship represents one of the most critical applications of our shared governance principles. While the ultimate fiduciary responsibility rests with the Board of Trustees, financial decisions affect all stakeholders and the long-term sustainability of the University. A shared governance approach to financial planning and resource allocation can generate outcomes that strengthen both our financial position and advancement of our Franciscan mission.

Shared governance processes help establish clear lines of accountability for financial decisions. When budget priorities are developed collaboratively, planning and accountability become a collective effort, rather than a hierarchical dictate. Collaborative financial planning can create more nuanced and relevant metrics for assessing the University's fiscal health and sustainability. Faculty input can highlight the need for investment to ensure academic quality, staff input can identify operational efficiencies and facilities issues, and administrative perspectives can ensure alignment with overall strategic priorities. This approach highlights the principle of "Expertise and Partnership" as stakeholders are given the opportunity to leverage their specialized knowledge across all areas of the University to develop a comprehensive financial assessment.

Furthermore, a shared governance approach to financial planning helps the entire community understand the realities faced by the University. Regular communication about budgetary constraints, investment priorities, and fiscal challenges can improve financial literacy across campus. When community members understand the budget, it helps them contribute more meaningfully to solutions and accept difficult decisions. Financial transparency builds trust and empowers all stakeholders to become responsible stewards of institutional resources.

Implementation of our shared governance principles can streamline the consultation and decision-making by identifying potential issues early in the planning process, reducing frictions associated with buy-in from stakeholders, preventing costly implementation failures, and leveraging expertise to develop innovative and effective ideas.

Being inclusive in the financial planning process can also promote financial sustainability through its impact on student experience. When students participate in the governance and planning processes, their needs are better understood and addressed, leading to an improved student experience and thus stronger institutional loyalty. This, in turn, can translate to increased alumni engagement and giving. Graduates who experienced a positive campus experience could be more likely to maintain connections with the University and provide financial support.

Shared governance with respect to financial planning should highlight the University's commitment to the collective stewardship of institutional resources to promote long-term sustainability and to advance its Franciscan mission. When financial planning and budgetary decisions are based on our principles of shared governance, the University can create stronger financial outcomes and an institutional culture based on trust and a common purpose.

V. Roles of each Stakeholder Group in Shared Governance

Board of Trustees

The Board is the ultimate authority and has ultimate responsibility for effecting the welfare, management, and direction of Siena. The BOT's authority and responsibility are based on New York State Law as well as Siena's Charter and Bylaws. They are primarily focused on assuring that the mission of the University will be fulfilled. The BOT's fiduciary duty is to safeguard financial stability, avoid financial exigency, and ensure that the University maintains its commitments to legal and regulatory compliance in carrying out its mission.

It is important to emphasize that, in performing these duties, the Board should exercise self-limitation in day-to-day decision making. The Board serves primarily in an advisory and oversight capacity as part of shared governance.

As provided in the Decision Matrix, and according to the most recent By-laws of Siena (dated March 22, 2024), the Board has the principal decision-making authority over the following areas:

- Hiring, reviewing, assessing, and removing the President of the University;
- Authorizing funds for faculty and non-faculty compensation, awarding benefits to all employees, and ratifying revisions to the Faculty Handbook;
- Final approval of promotions, tenure, sabbaticals, and emeritus status for individual faculty;
- Authorizing the development of the Strategic Plan and Master Plan, including construction of new buildings;
- Authorizing the development of comprehensive fundraising campaigns, acceptance of restricted gifts, and developing and revising investment policies; and
- Final approval of the granting of all degrees in academic programs and approving the closure of academic programs if necessary for financial reasons.

In discharging its responsibilities, the Board is guided by the mission of Siena, and works cooperatively with the President, the Provost, members of the Cabinet, faculty, administration/staff, and students, as appropriate.

The President

The President is the chief visionary and sense-maker for the institution. The best presidents are distinguished by their ability to innovate, their prescience in anticipating challenges and opportunities, and their skill in persuading the community to share their vision for the future. The role entails broad responsibilities, including:

- Serving as the public face of the University;
- Safeguarding institutional resources and generating new resources;
- Managing most nonacademic areas of the University;
- Ensuring that university operations conform to state and federal laws, to institutional policies, and to sound academic standards.

Most institutional decisions are either made by the President or made by the Board on the President's recommendation. Thus, the President is integral to nearly all shared governance processes in the University.

In fulfilling these responsibilities, the President must carefully examine each decision in light of Siena's Mission, always working to advance the common good of the entire institution. In accomplishing these goals, listening and communicating are critically important. Listening means actively soliciting feedback from everyone impacted by the decision and carefully weighing their input. It also means listening to and respecting recommendations made through shared governance processes. Communicating means informing the community of decisions being undertaken, as well as explaining the rationale for decisions when they have been made. In cases where a recommendation carries the weight of 'primary authority' (as defined in the Decision Matrix), the President has an extra obligation to uphold the recommendation in all but the rarest and most extreme circumstances. In such cases, the responsibility to transparently explain the rationale for this departure from the norm is especially critical.

The Faculty

The Board of Trustees (BOT) and the President of Siena recognize the faculty's role, authority, responsibility, and participation in shared governance on matters affecting the welfare of the University, especially the assurance of academic excellence. The University fully recognizes the responsibilities of the faculty in accordance with the AAUP Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, which includes but is not limited to:

- Primary authority over instruction, program development, and curriculum;
- Primary authority to set requirements for degrees offered in courses, determining when the requirements have been met, and authorizing the President and Board to grant degrees;

- Primary authority over faculty status and related matters, including appointments, non-reappointments, promotions, granting of tenure, sabbaticals, and dismissal.

Most of this work is accomplished through faculty committees. Thus, faculty participation on committees is critical for effective shared governance. The principal governance committees are the General Faculty Committee, the Committee on Faculty Status, the Board of Instruction, and the Faculty Grievance Committee.

Faculty also serve on subcommittees of the Board, special committees established by the General Faculty Committee, and standing or special committees established by officers and administrators of the University where faculty representation for shared governance is required. Two recent examples include The Middle States Self-Study Steering Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee. In each of these instances of Shared Governance, a faculty member co-chaired the Committee with additional membership from members of the BOT, faculty, administration/staff, and students. In the spirit of collaboration and cooperation from all community representatives who served, positive results were achieved.

The Chair of the General Faculty Committee, or their designee, is invited to all meetings of the Board to provide information and to report on matters of concern to the faculty. Additionally, General Faculty Committee members serve on all standing committees of the Board except the Executive and Audit Committees.

The General Faculty Committee has the sole responsibility for the electoral processes for membership of any committee that has faculty representation. All full-time faculty members are eligible to vote in faculty elections, including full-time members of the teaching staff, the President, Provost, Deans, and full-time members of the Library faculty, including the Director of the Library.

Department Chairs and Program Chairs are faculty leaders who help ensure that academic programs are being well-administered, that student needs are being met, and that curricula are being implemented and updated appropriately. Chairs also play a critical role in the evaluation of faculty as they apply for tenure, promotion, and sabbatical.

Administrators and Staff

Administrators and staff play a key role in shared governance, as they are responsible for strategic planning, resource management and university operations. Administrators/staff play a critical role in fostering communication and ensuring that all voices are heard.

While faculty have primary authority for academic policy and curriculum design, administrators both consult on academic policies and help to implement them. Staff collaboration is critical to efforts such as

- Developing and revising academic program assessment guidelines

- Policies regarding delivery modalities
- Creating and amending academic and advising policies
- Ensuring institutional level accreditation
- Articulation agreement support

Administrators and staff take a more primary role in the decision making processes as it relates to overall institutional management in areas such as

- Revision of administrative and staff handbooks
- Employee benefits
- Addition and elimination of athletic teams and programs
- Organization and structure of administrative units
- Development of non academic program assessment guidelines
- Campus health and safety policies
- Significant projects and maintenance outside of the facilities master plan
- Revising plans and protocols for emergency operations
- Addition and elimination of non academic programs
- Design of information management and security policies
- Development of admissions criteria
- Development and revision of investment policies
- Student retention and recruitment

Because of their expertise in areas of finance and administration, administrators/staff take a lead role in fostering financial solvency. This includes preparing the annual budget for approval by the BOT, and allocating funds for academic and non-academic programs.

Administrators and staff are tasked with long term planning and identifying institutional priorities, including

- Development of the strategic plan and facilities master plan
- Creation and execution of comprehensive fundraising campaign
- Setting and attaining enrollment planning goals
- Crafting brand platform and visual identity

Administrators and staff drive organizational structure and ensure human resources are in place to support operational efficiency

- Development of policies for the hiring of academic and non academic personnel
- Performance evaluation procedures

- Promotion and salary levels for staff and administrators

Because of their knowledge and expertise in certain areas, administrators and staff are frequently called upon to serve on committees and task forces to ensure this constituency's concerns and contributions are considered.

Students

Siena's primary purpose as a learning community is to educate and inspire its students through a transformative academic and social experience. It is therefore imperative to include the student voice in the framework of shared governance at Siena. Students provide a unique perspective on matters impacting their own experiences, and in most matters of consequence to the University, students should be informed and heard. Providing students a voice in higher education decision-making is in fact a right advocated for by the AAUP, which emphasizes the importance of student input in shaping policies and decisions that affect their educational experience.

Students have authority to participate in shared governance primarily through representation in student government and advisory committees. Student government holds seats on committees that are involved in making policies and acts as a bridge between the student body and administration. Student government also consults on proposed changes to the student handbook and addition or elimination of non-academic programs. It is also the responsibility of students to run for office and vote; these elected representatives are critically important in advocating on behalf of the student body.

Students accept the role of advocacy through participation in government and by also providing feedback when asked. Through engagement in surveys, community town halls, and other campus events, students can voice their opinions and advocate for change. Without student involvement, issues important to students likely won't be elevated to the administration. Students are also an important stakeholder within the Decision Matrix. Students should be informed or consulted in aspects of major decisions impacting their education or campus experience.

Siena must be committed to fostering student engagement and ensuring that their voices contribute meaningfully to the governance process. By actively participating in shared governance, students help shape the academic and social environment of the University, confirming that policies and decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of the student body. Their involvement strengthens the institution's commitment to inclusivity, collaboration, and excellence in higher education.

VI. Views and Attitudes toward Shared Governance

One challenge to shared governance is a lack of common understanding as to what shared governance means. In this section, we will address common misconceptions about shared governance. We will also address different perceptions that may exist among various stakeholder groups as to what shared governance is or should be.

One common misconception is that shared governance is a system of majoritarian decision-making. This is simply not the case. There are certainly instances in which a vote may be taken within the context of a shared governance process – for example, when the faculty recommends Handbook revisions to the Board for approval, the mechanism of securing that recommendation is a faculty-wide vote; faculty vote when they elect representatives to serve on committees; and the Board may vote as part of its internal decision-making processes. However, perusing the Decision Matrix reveals that the vast majority of decisions in shared governance do not involve voting.

Another difference between majoritarian decision-making and shared governance rests in the role of individual community members versus representative groups. In a majoritarian system, each individual can influence the ultimate decision through their vote. In shared governance, however, many recommendations are made via committees of elected representatives. Thus, the point at which individuals get a vote is at the point of choosing representatives, not at the point of ultimately making decisions. This means that most of the work of governance happens within committees, rather than at open forums such as faculty meetings or staff meetings. Therefore, serving on committees is the most effective way for individuals to participate in shared governance.

Another common misconception is that shared governance is a form of consensus-based decision-making. Although these processes share some similarities, especially in their early stages, they differ in the end point of discussion and in the ultimate locus of decision-making authority. Both consensus-building and shared governance begin with sharing information, followed by a discussion stage in which diverse viewpoints are solicited from all stakeholders. In consensus-based decision-making, discussion continues iteratively until a consensus has been reached. Ultimately, decision-making authority rests with the entire group. In contrast, shared governance discussions are often brought to an end before consensus is achieved, either at a predetermined time or whenever the points raised become repetitive. This is not to say that discussion should be perfunctory – on the contrary, thorough discussion featuring a wide range of viewpoints is important. But the primary purpose of discussion in shared governance is to reveal multiple viewpoints, not necessarily to resolve all possible disagreements. Ultimately, shared governance decisions typically do not rest with the entire community, but are made by one clearly designated person or small group (such as the Board). Consensus at the level of the entire community is not required. Shared governance does require that all stakeholders be consulted as part of the decision-making process, and seeks to ensure that all relevant views are brought to the table before a final decision is made.

None of this is to say that consensus has no place in shared governance. Indeed, many committees use a consensus-based approach for their own internal decision-making. Furthermore, community-level consensus may well emerge through the shared governance process. When this happens, decision-makers will presumably want to follow the consensus whenever possible. However, they are not strictly compelled to do so. In cases when a decision runs contrary to an existing consensus, the decision-maker has a special obligation to clearly and transparently justify why their decision is ultimately in the best interests of the University.

Differences among stakeholder groups

While the misconceptions described above can be found throughout the University community, they are especially common among faculty. Indeed, some faculty members have been known to allege violations of shared governance simply because they would have preferred a different outcome. But shared governance does not guarantee that every decision will be popular, or that all individuals will be happy with all decisions. Indeed, there may be cases when a shared governance process yields decisions that are downright painful. The central goal of shared governance is to promote wise decisions by ensuring that decision-makers have access to all relevant information and perspectives. Shared governance cannot protect us from pain, but when done well it can provide reassurance that decisions are firmly rooted in reality, in our mission, and in the best interests of the entire institution.

While faculty are often surprised and frustrated that shared governance isn't more consensus-driven, administrators and trustees can be equally surprised and frustrated by the faculty's legitimate expectations of being consulted in decision-making. Shared governance is quite different from the hierarchical decision-making process employed at many business organizations. Similarly, the time required for shared governance to play out can be longer than business leaders are accustomed to. Decisions that a corporation might make within weeks could take months at a university. Wise administrators will resist the urge to circumvent shared governance processes in the name of expedience: the time required for community consultation should be seen as an investment in the soundness and durability of future decisions. By the same token, wise faculty should understand that complaints of a 'rushed process' may understandably sound tone-deaf to administrators, who are under pressure to implement decisions and show progress to the Board. The stereotype that every shared governance decision drags out for years is not a wholly unearned exaggeration, and it is in everyone's best interest to minimize such roadblocks.

Other differences between faculty and administrators center on their feelings about the institution and prioritization of challenges. One survey of faculty and administrators⁷ identified an "optimism gap", in which administrators are typically more optimistic about the future than faculty and also have a higher opinion of shared governance on campus. Administrators tend to be

⁷ Huron Consulting Group and the American Council on Education (2024). *Resilient Institutions and Shared Governance: Results from a National Survey of Faculty and Senior Administrators*. Retrieved from https://connect.chronicle.com/CHE-3P-WC-2024-05-08-Transformation-CS-Huron_Landing-Page.html

most concerned with enrollment and budget issues, while faculty tend to be more concerned with burnout, morale, and turnover. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these different concerns give rise to different wishes and expectations of each other – faculty place a high value on principles of academic standards, academic freedom, and integrity. They most want to see transparency, communication, and collaboration from the administration. For their part, administrators are often more concerned with pragmatic solutions to immediate problems. They are typically most anxious for faculty to be willing to make changes in the face of budget and enrollment challenges. These differences are understandable functions of the different pressures and challenges that each group experiences in their day-to-day work. Rather than seeing one group as ‘right’ and the other as ‘wrong’, it is helpful to view these perceptions as equally valid windows into the overall institutional reality.

VII. Behaviors Supporting Shared Governance

Shared governance requires that all participants come to the table in good faith, communicate openly, and navigate disagreement from a position of mutual respect. Disagreement is a natural and expected part of shared governance. Healthy conflict and creative tension can be valuable — they can foster deeper discussions, challenge assumptions, and lead to stronger, more innovative solutions. Disagreement can become problematic, however, when individuals engage in unhelpful behaviors that escalate conflict rather than channeling it productively. These behaviors may stem from valid frustration or disappointment, but ultimately they undermine shared governance. By the same token, behaviors associated with healthy problem-solving can help keep the process productive.

What follows are specific examples of behaviors that can either help or hinder shared governance:

Behaviors helpful for shared governance

Helpful for Shared Governance	Not Helpful
<p>Maintain strong, frequent, and clear communication</p> <p>Explicitly define roles: who decides, who advises, who is informed, etc.</p> <p>Include all stakeholders; show trust and respect for all stakeholders</p> <p>Once a process is established, it must be followed to respect all stakeholders and the institution</p> <p>Remain transparent on priorities/mission</p> <p>Share facts in a clear and direct manner (i.e financial information).</p> <p>Clearly convey the rationale for your decision or position</p> <p>Do your homework – higher ed is complicated; understanding takes effort</p> <p>Ask for feedback and take it seriously</p> <p>Maintain an open mind</p> <p>Keep promises</p> <p>Understand the rhythms of the academic calendar; try to follow those rhythms</p> <p>Actively look for common ground</p> <p>If things get heated, cool off and come back to the table</p> <p>Take responsibility for your actions / decisions</p> <p>Recognize that even well-designed processes may lead to outcomes you personally disagree with — this is a natural part of governance and of life.</p>	<p>Rushing decisions</p> <p>Circumventing established processes</p> <p>Expressing frustration in a way that disrupts dialogue</p> <p>Framing disagreements in adversarial or 'us vs. them' terms.</p> <p>Casting yourself / your group as the victim</p> <p>Complaining without offering solutions</p> <p>Attacking the process because you dislike the outcome</p> <p>Being distrustful or disrespectful of other stakeholders</p> <p>Stereotyping / making assumptions about what others will say, do, or think</p> <p>Performatively soliciting feedback (without intending to take it seriously)</p> <p>Unwillingness to seek common ground or compromise (“my way or the highway”)</p> <p>Resisting accountability or responsibility for your actions / decisions</p> <p>Withholding information</p> <p>Walking away from the table</p>

VIII. Recommendations

1. Practice Effective Communication

Effective communication is the foundation of shared governance. Transparent, inclusive, and accountable communication ensures that all stakeholders are informed, engaged, and empowered to contribute to decision-making processes. A strong communication framework does the following:

- Promotes transparency by providing clear and timely updates on governance matters and critical decisions, ensuring that faculty, staff, students, and administrators have access to relevant information.
- Encourages inclusivity by fostering open dialogue and ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard and valued.
- Strengthens trust and collaboration by creating a culture of shared responsibility and mutual respect in governance processes.

To support meaningful communication in shared governance, the following principles should guide our practices:

- **Clarity:** Information should be presented in a clear, accessible manner. Communication should be structured so that all stakeholders can easily understand key messages and implications.
- **Timeliness:** Updates should be shared regularly and proactively, ensuring that stakeholders have sufficient time to process information and engage meaningfully in discussions and decision-making. Delayed or inconsistent communication undermines trust and limits participation.
- **Responsiveness:** Shared governance relies on a two-way flow of communication. Feedback, questions, and concerns should be acknowledged and addressed in a meaningful way. Open channels for discussion should be maintained so that communication is not just about disseminating information but also about fostering dialogue.

The Role of “Informed Citizens” in Shared Governance

Effective shared governance requires active participation from all members of the community. Communication cannot be a one-way street where responsibility falls solely on those sending messages. The receiving end matters just as much.

Every individual has a role in staying informed and engaged by:

- Reading regular updates, such as the Daily Digest and governance-related emails.
- Attending town halls, Council of Administrators and Staff meetings, faculty meetings, and other forums for discussion.
- Ask questions for clarification before forming conclusions or making assumptions about decisions or processes.
- Engage in discussions with an open mind, recognizing that governance decisions are often complex and involve multiple perspectives.
- Encourage a culture of constructive inquiry, where seeking to understand is the norm.

Ownership of communication means understanding that informed decision-making depends on active participation. When individuals take responsibility for staying informed and clarifying uncertainties, governance discussions become more productive and solutions-focused.

Special Responsibilities for Committee Representatives

Committee representatives play a crucial role in ensuring bidirectional communication between governance bodies and their respective constituencies. Their responsibilities include:

- **Serving as communication liaisons.** Representatives must actively share key discussions, decisions, and initiatives from committees with the groups they represent and bring feedback from those groups back to the committee.
- **Owning the job.** Committee members should take the initiative in facilitating discussions, ensuring that important information is relayed effectively, and advocating for concerns raised by their colleagues.
- **Gathering and sharing input.** Representatives should create opportunities for dialogue, solicit feedback from their constituencies, and ensure that diverse viewpoints are considered in governance discussions.

Transparency

Trust in governance is built over time through consistent, transparent communication. When the majority of decisions are made openly, with broad engagement, the community is more likely to support and understand those moments when full consultation isn't possible.

There are times when certain decisions must be made quickly or require confidentiality—such as personnel matters, legal considerations, or urgent institutional decisions.

Not every decision can go through the most thorough consultation process. However, when a culture of transparency and open communication is established in all other areas, it fosters trust that:

- Decisions requiring confidentiality are handled with integrity.
- When quick decisions must be made, they are done so with the best interest of the community in mind.
- Leadership will communicate as openly as possible about the process and reasoning behind such decisions.

By embracing these communication principles and responsibilities, Siena can sustain a governance structure that is inclusive, responsive, and effective in advancing the institution's mission.

2. Invest in Leadership Development

One of the key themes that we encountered throughout our work is the need for strong leadership. To this end, we would strongly recommend that the University invest in leadership training for community members who are interested in such roles.

- Much of our success in shared governance—and indeed our larger success as an institution—hinges on having skilled leaders who can help the community build consensus and navigate change.
- This need is especially clear for formal leaders such as Program Chairs and committee chairs. But we would argue for an even deeper need: after all, we expect ALL faculty to be leaders. Our Tenure & Promotion standards clearly say that substantial leadership experience is a requirement for promotion to full Professor. Yet, we provide no training in this regard, and most faculty members have never had any sort of leadership training.
- Many campus committees need to navigate conflict and strong emotions in building consensus. The most important things can also be the most challenging. Outcomes will be better when the committee members—and especially chairs—have strong leadership skills.
- Training would be valuable for mid-career and senior faculty who are actively taking on leadership roles but could also be a great professional development opportunity for younger colleagues. This would be an investment in our future, as we'd be preparing the next generation of formal and informal leaders.

- Leadership development for administrators and staff would help complement ongoing efforts to improve our talent management, giving people clearer career paths at Siena and helping ensure that everyone is working to their full potential.

Some of the more demanding leadership roles on campus might benefit from having a formal term that is served as “elect”. For example, in spring 2025 the Faculty voted to implement a formal Faculty Chair-Elect position,, allowing time to grow into the role before taking on the full weight of leadership. This should ensure more continuity and make it less intimidating to step into certain roles. Chairs of the Handbook Committee, Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee, and Council of Administrators and Staff might also benefit from this treatment.

Committees like the General Faculty Committee, the Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee, the Handbook Committee, and the Joint Budget Committee might benefit from developing a formal process for onboarding new members that allows them to develop the knowledge base required.

3. Strengthen Shared Governance in the Budgeting Process

One of the most critical aspects of shared governance is the budgeting process, as it impacts resource allocation, strategic planning priorities, and institutional sustainability. In our discussions and community feedback, lack of clear shared governance around budgeting processes emerged as a key area in need of strengthening and clarification.

The primary shared governance committee for budgetary issues is the Joint Budget Committee (JBC), which includes both administrators and faculty – specifically, the CFO, the Provost, all Deans, the Director of the Library, the Faculty Chair, and 4 elected faculty representatives. We recommend that JBC work with the incoming CFO (beginning August 2025) to consider the following questions:

- Is this committee composition appropriate?
 - Should the Council of Administrators and Staff be represented?
 - Should students be represented?
 - Should the Chief of Staff be formally included? (He has been participating since 2023.)
- Should there be more interaction between JBC and other budget stakeholders such as the Board’s Strategic Finance Committee, the Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee, the General Faculty Committee, and/or the Council of Administrators and Staff Executive Committee?
- Is the charge adequate? Can it be strengthened?
- Can JBC establish an annual timeline of activities to more meaningfully participate in the budget development process?
- How can JBC best facilitate two-way communication between administration and community?

- How can JBC best foster financial literacy for members as well as in the community?

In considering these issues, we would urge all parties to maintain the following best practices for effective shared governance in budgeting:

- **Transparency:** Clear communication of financial data and institutional priorities fosters trust.
- **Inclusivity:** Participation ensures diverse perspectives and informed decision-making.
- **Accountability:** Defined roles and responsibilities prevent conflicts and inefficiencies.
- **Adaptability:** The ability to respond to financial challenges strengthens institutional resilience.

An annual shared governance process around budget development might look something like this:

- Initial Planning and Forecasting
 - The administration prepares preliminary financial projections based on enrollment, tuition revenue, and other income sources.
 - Budget committees review financial trends and institutional priorities.
- Stakeholder Consultation and Input
 - Faculty and Council of Administrators and Staff participate in discussions on funding priorities.
 - Open forums, surveys, and town halls are conducted to gather broad input.
- Drafting the Budget Proposal
 - The administration consolidates input and develops a draft budget.
 - Draft budget is shared with select stakeholders.
- Review and Recommendations
 - Governance bodies provide feedback and suggest adjustments.
 - The proposal is refined through negotiations and revisions.
- Approval and Implementation
 - The President and Cabinet recommend final approval from The Board of Trustees.
 - The administration implements the budget, ensuring alignment with strategic goals.
- Ongoing Assessment and Adjustments
 - Regular financial reports are shared with select stakeholders.
 - Adjustments are made in response to economic shifts or institutional needs.
-

Shared governance within the budgeting process ensures that Siena allocates resources effectively while balancing the interests of the University. By fostering transparency, inclusivity, and accountability, Siena can create an adaptive budgeting process that supports both financial sustainability and academic excellence.

4. Increase Staff Participation in Governance

Staff and administrators—through their collective wisdom, dedication, and perspectives—play a vital role in shaping the policies, decisions, and initiatives that will define Siena’s future. Siena took a meaningful step in 2023 to amplify staff participation. Staff now hold a seat on the executive committee of the Council of Administrators and Staff, securing their representation on the University’s most significant advocacy board for staff and administration. However, more can and should be done to foster a culture of inclusivity and active participation by staff and administration in Siena governance.

The University should commit to improving communication channels so that key decisions and institutional updates are accessible to all employees. Information should be shared with all stakeholders on a similar timeline, as practicable. Regular town halls, digital updates, and open forums will ensure transparency and allow for meaningful dialogue.

The University should encourage greater staff and administration participation in surveys, focus groups, and advisory committees that help shape policies and initiatives that impact the University community.

Leadership development and professional training opportunities should be expanded, empowering employees to take on greater responsibilities and leadership roles within the institution.

The University should continue to highlight and celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of Siena employees, reinforcing the essential role they play in Siena’s success. Celebrating a community member each Friday as part of Siena’s Franciscan Fridays initiative of the 2024-25 academic year is an example of an innovative way Siena can promote its workforce.

Siena thrives when its employees are actively engaged in governance. Every employee should feel empowered to contribute their expertise, ideas, and leadership as Saints working together to advance Siena’s mission.

5. Establish a process for reviewing shared governance

Going forward, it will be vital to undertake a regular review of the Decision Matrix. This review should assess whether processes agreed to are being properly followed, identify any problems or challenges that may arise, and implement any necessary changes. This work should be undertaken jointly by representatives from the General Faculty Committee, the Council Of Administrators and Staff Executive Committee, the Student Senate, the Provost, the Deans, and Cabinet. We would recommend that this group meet at least annually for the purpose of discussing potential updates and challenges, with an eye towards formally implementing revisions either every other year or every three years (or more frequently if needed). This review would be aided by three specific steps:

1. The University should establish an open form to collect shared governance concerns. This can be linked on the shared governance website, with text explaining that comments will be reviewed annually.
2. The General Faculty Committee should add a question about shared governance to its annual Faculty Satisfaction Survey.
3. When governance committees submit their annual reports, the Faculty Chair should ask them to comment on whether the Decision Matrix is being adhered to, as well as any shared governance challenges they may have experienced.

The reviewing group should proactively consult with the Board Governance Committee and with the President during their review process. Updates can be accepted by mutual agreement, but substantial revisions may require ratification by the full Board: the President and the Board Governance Committee should use their best judgment in making this determination. Any revisions being considered should be shared with the entire community for feedback before being finalized.

6. Review Council of Administrators and Staff bylaws, administrator handbook, and staff handbook to align with shared governance documentation

The Council of Administrators and Staff serves as the representative body for both groups. It provides a forum for the discussion of issues of common concern, and its primary function is to foster communication both among and between administrators/staff and university leadership.

The council's bylaws are the foundation for governing and provide guidance on membership, leadership, meetings, and operating procedures. They can be found in the Administrator's Handbook.

The council's bylaws were established on February 3, 1993, revised in Spring 2009, and reviewed again in August of 2014. To ensure the bylaws accurately reflect the efforts of shared governance, it is recommended that they be [reviewed](#) and amended.

- Amend to reflect current practices (e.g., informational group not a voting group, membership distribution)
- Establish a regular review timeline

The [Siena Administrators' Handbook](#) has been assembled to provide all administrators with a clear set of expectations, policies, and procedures that support and promote our shared understanding of life within the community and the work of the University. The document was put into effect on September 15th 2005, and revisions have been made through June 2013. It is recommended that the administrator handbook be reviewed and updated to align with shared governance documentation. A regular review and update timeline should be established.

The [Siena Staff Handbook](#) has been assembled to provide all staff with a clear set of expectations, policies, and procedures that support and promote our shared understanding of life within the community and the work of the University. The document was created in December of 1992, and revisions have been made through June 2013. However, it is recommended that the staff handbook be reviewed and updated to align with shared governance documentation. For example, Council of Administrators and Staff bylaws should be added to the staff handbook, and a regular review/update timeline should be established.

Shared Governance Decision Matrix

A decision matrix is a tool that clarifies who has the authority to make decisions and who within the community should be consulted, offer recommendations, and be informed. Each row within the matrix is its own decision. One of the first challenges in creating a decision matrix is determining what level of granularity is most helpful. Running a university requires hundreds of decisions every day, some large and some small. Capturing every decision would be impossible, and the attempt could yield a matrix the size of a phone book. We wanted this document to be a useful reference, and we felt strongly that this would require restraint. Not every decision falls under the scope and purview of shared governance¹.

This matrix is the product of over 25 hours of discussion over several months. We have endeavored to capture the most critical shared governance functions of the University. While it would be hubris to claim perfection, we sincerely hope the community finds this to be a useful resource. The Decision Matrix stands as a set of best practices for how to reach decisions collaboratively. We expect that it will be applied with common sense and good judgment, depending upon the situation at hand.

There will inevitably come times when decisions must be made that were not anticipated in this matrix. When such situations arise, we recommend that all stakeholders come together to discuss and agree to a process well before making the decision. The process should be shared with all stakeholders at the beginning of the consultation process. It should clearly define what groups need to be informed and consulted, who makes the recommendation, and who makes the final decision, as guided by the definitions below. The process should also adhere to the guiding principles laid out in the Philosophy Statement.

As the University grows and changes, the Decision Matrix may need periodic updating. We hope this task will be easier with the starting point we've established.

¹ In an early conversation, a task force member asked “isn't this just someone doing their job?”, and this question became our touchstone in deciding what to include. For example, we considered including “planning student orientation” as a decision. Orientation is a complex enterprise that requires considerable effort and cooperation between administrators and staff in multiple areas of the college. Furthermore, it is critically important in helping students transition to Siena, building their feeling of belonging in our community, and planting seeds for engaged alumni. But planning orientation, we felt, is also clearly something that could be described as people in these offices simply “doing their jobs”—while it's complex and important, we ultimately decided it did not warrant a line in the matrix. Most of our meetings entailed discussion of this nature; deciding what *not* to include took as much time and consideration as deciding what to include.

Definitions

Consultation

Consultation is the process of engaging stakeholder groups to gather their advice or opinions before a recommendation or decision is made. It involves exchanging information and perspectives to achieve a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. While advisory in nature, the consultation process ensures that stakeholders can provide relevant insights and facts, enabling recommenders and decision-makers to make well-informed choices. The decision matrix identifies the minimum standard; broader consultation with people/groups not listed is encouraged where possible. Consultation should lean toward being more inclusive, involving a diverse range of voices to enhance the quality of the ultimate decision.

Recommendation

A recommendation is a formal suggestion made to a decision-maker after consultation with stakeholders. Recommenders are responsible for collecting input, providing expert insights, evaluating relevant information, and presenting actionable options. Recommendations may sometimes include alternative solutions, along with their benefits and costs, to ensure decision-makers have clear and well-supported choices.

Primary authority: Recommendations can carry different degrees of authority. In some cases, it would violate institutional norms and principles of shared governance for the decision-maker to depart from the recommendation. In these cases, the recommending group exercises what the AAUP terms “primary authority.”² For example, faculty have primary authority over tenure decisions and thus rightly expect the President and Board to uphold decisions made by the Committee on Faculty Status. While the President and Board have the power to overrule the committee, they should do so only in the most extreme and well-justified circumstances. In these cases, the decision maker needs to effectively communicate the reasons why the recommendation was not followed. But not all recommendations carry such weight; some may genuinely be purely advisory and others fall somewhere in between. We have generally not tried to split hairs over this point, but we have indicated those recommendations that carry primary authority with an asterisk.

Decision

A decision is the final outcome of a deliberative process that includes careful consideration of recommendations and consultations with stakeholders. The decision-maker is responsible for addressing any disagreements, making the final determination, justifying their decision (including why it might depart from the recommendation), and ensuring the organization follows through on implementing the decision.

² AAUP Shared Governance Assessment Tool
https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/AAUP_Shared_Governance_Assessment_Tool.pdf

Decision-makers are often involved, to at least some degree, in the consultation and recommendation process. In particular, recommenders may often wish to consult with decision-makers in the course of developing a recommendation. Decision-makers may also need to consult with university counsel, accrediting bodies, and others as part of their due diligence; we do not include such consultation in the matrix.

Informing

Before the decision, informing entails sharing initial information about a discussion or initiative, including details such as committee membership, objectives, timeline, and the consultation process. After the decision, informing involves communicating the final decision to relevant stakeholders to ensure transparency and understanding.

Internal Community

The “Internal Community” refers to everyone who makes up the Siena campus community, including (but not necessarily limited to) students, faculty, administrators, staff, and friars.

Extended Community

The “Extended Community” refers to all members of the Internal Community, along with alumni, donors, and community partners.

Faculty

The term ‘faculty’ holistically refers to everyone who holds a faculty contract at Siena, including part-time, adjunct, visiting, teaching, tenure-track, and tenured faculty.

Council of Administrators and Staff

Council of Administrators and Staff includes all Siena administrators and staff. Information is often disseminated via the council's executive committee, which is an elected body.

Decision Matrix

		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
	Academics				
1.	Creation of new degree program/area of study	President	Board of Instruction* ³	Faculty	Extended community & general public
2.	Existing curriculum updates/revisions	Provost	Board of Instruction* ³	Faculty	Internal community
3.	Graduation requirements	Provost	Board of Instruction* ³	Faculty	Internal community
4.	Honorary degrees	Board	President and Honorary Degree Committee	Nominations can come from any community member	Extended community & general public
5.	Policies regarding delivery modalities	Provost	Board of Instruction	ITS and faculty	Faculty; Students; Academic Affairs administrators; ITS
6.	Developing and revising academic program assessment guidelines	Provost	Deans; Office of Institutional Effectiveness; Student Learning Assessment Committee	Faculty	Faculty; Program Chairs
7.	Institutional level accreditation (MSCHE), designing the self-study	President	MSCHE Steering Committee	Most parts of the university	Internal community

³ *Recommendation carries primary authority as defined in the 'Recommendation' section, above

		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
8.	Articulation agreements	Provost	Deans	Program Directors and Chairs	Extended community & general public
9.	Academic program closure for academic reasons (e.g., elimination of a minor, dropping obsolete programs, reorganization)	Provost	Deans; Board of Instruction; program chairs	Faculty in the program; students in the program	Extended community
10.	Academic program closure for financial reasons	Board	Provost; President	Deans; VP Finance; Board of Instruction; faculty; students	Extended community
11.	Creating/amending academic university policies	President	Provost; Deans	Board of Instruction; faculty; Academic Affairs administrators	Internal community
12.	Developing and revising advising policies	Provost	Deans; AVP SASE	Students; faculty; Registrar	Faculty; Students; Academic Affairs administrators
13.	Topics and methods of instruction in individual classes	Instructor of record	NA	Other faculty and Chair in department or program as appropriate ⁴	Students in the class
14.	Revisions to faculty handbook	Board	Faculty votes to recommend the Handbook to the President and Board	Faculty Handbook Committee and Faculty Handbook Working Group; faculty	Faculty; Academic Affairs administrators

⁴Consultation can help ensure that topics of instruction are aligned with disciplinary standards and the program's learning outcomes.

		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
	Administration				
15.	Deciding faculty line allocation	President	Provost; Deans	Department; Program Chairs	Department; Program faculty
16.	Organization of administrative unit(s)	President	VPs; Cabinet	Directors and staff in affected areas	Internal community
17.	Developing admissions criteria	President	Cabinet; Graduate Program Directors	Admissions Office; Graduate Program Office; Deans; Program Chairs; Athletic Administrators	Internal community
18.	Non-academic program assessment guidelines	VP's / Cabinet	OIE	Staff and admins associated with programs being assessed	Staff and admins associated with programs being assessed
19.	Revisions to staff handbook/policies	President	HR	Council of Administrators and Staff Executive Committee; staff; Cabinet	Staff; Administrators
20.	Revisions to administrator handbook/policies	President	HR	Council of Administrators and Staff Executive Committee; administrators; Cabinet	Staff; Administrators
21.	Revisions to student handbook/policies	President	VP Student Life; Cabinet	Student Senate; Student Life administrators	Internal community

July 11 2025

		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
22.	Employee benefits	Board	VP for Finance and Admin; AVP for HR; Cabinet	Council of Administrators and Staff Executive Committee; Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee	All Employees
23.	Addition and elimination of non-academic programs ⁵	President	Cabinet	Board; faculty; administrators; staff; Student Senate	Internal community
24.	Overall student retention and recruitment strategies	President	Provost; Cabinet	Appropriate administrators; staff; faculty; students	Board; Affected community members
25.	Creating/amending non-academic policies ⁶	President or Relevant VP	Relevant VP	Appropriate administrators; staff; students	Internal community or All Employees (depending on the policy)
26.	Developing and revising campus health and safety policies ⁷	President	AVP for Facilities Management; Risk Officer; Director of Public Safety; Cabinet; Director of Health Services; Title IX Coordinator	Faculty; administrators; staff; students	Internal community; Appropriate external partners

⁵ Includes student life programs, non-NCAA sports, etc.

⁶ Note that every policy document lists the "approval authority" for that policy

⁷ Includes longer-term aspects of pandemic response

		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
27.	Revising plans and protocols for emergency operations ⁸	President	Cabinet	Director of Public Safety; AVP for Facilities; Cabinet	Internal community
28.	Adoption of institution-wide technology and software service platforms ⁹	Relevant VP	CIO	President; ITS; community groups that would interact most with the platform	Internal community
29.	Design of information management and security policies	President	Chief Information Officer; Cabinet	Faculty; administrators; staff	Board; All employees
30.	Develop and revise investment policies	Board	President; VP Finance; Investment Manager	N/A	N/A
31.	Significant projects and maintenance outside the facilities master plan	President ¹⁰	AVP for Facilities and administrators responsible for the relevant area	Relevant faculty; staff; administrators; students	Affected community members
32.	NCAA divisional classification	Board	President VP Athletics	Appropriate Board committees Cabinet, athletic staff	Internal community External community
33.	Conference membership for NCAA sports	Board	President VP Athletics	Appropriate Board committees Cabinet, athletic staff	Internal community External community

⁸ Some aspects may be dictated by state or federal law

⁹ Includes both academic and non-academic technology (e.g. payroll systems, etrieve, etc.). Anything requiring special budget allocation would need to be decided by the President.

¹⁰ Board decides for the largest projects; college policies specify the cost beyond which the Board must be involved

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		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
34.	Addition and elimination of NCAA athletic teams & programs	President	VP Athletics	Cabinet; Board; Title IX Coordinator; Athletic conference	Internal community
Budgeting					
35.	University budget approval	Board	President; VP Finance; Cabinet	Faculty; administrators; staff	All employees
36.	Budget allocation for academic programs	President	Provost* ¹¹ ; VP Finance; Cabinet	Joint Budget Committee; program chairs; deans; faculty	Affected departments; programs
37.	Budget allocation for non-academic programs	President	Relevant VP*; VP Finance; Cabinet	Admins associated with the programs	Affected departments; programs
Institutional strategy					
38.	Development of the strategic plan	Board	Strategic Planning Committee; Cabinet; President	Internal community	Internal community
39.	Development of the facilities master plan	Board	Facility Master Planning Committee; AVP for Facilities; Cabinet; President	Internal community	Internal community
40.	Development of comprehensive fundraising campaigns and initiatives	Board	VP for Development; Cabinet; President	Development Office (with input from community & donors)	Internal community

¹¹ *Recommendation carries primary authority as defined in the 'Recommendation' section, above
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		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
41.	Enrollment planning goals	President	VP for Enrollment; Enrollment Leadership; Cabinet	Admissions Office; relevant program directors	Faculty; Council of Administrators and Staff
42.	Developing brand platform and visual identity	President	VP for Strategy, Communications, and Outreach	Faculty; Council of Administrators and Staff; Cabinet; Board	Internal community
43.	Changes to the Bylaws of Siena	Board	Board Governance Committee	Board, Board's Counsel	Internal community
44.	Proposal to NYSED to change the Charter	Board	President, Provost, Cabinet	BOI, faculty, and/or administrators and staff as appropriate for the specific change	Internal community External community
45.	Changes to the Mission	Board	President, Provost, Cabinet	Internal community; Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe	Internal community External community

		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
	Personnel				
46.	Hiring president	Board	Search Committee	Faculty; administrators; staff; students; friars	Internal community
47.	Policy and procedure for review of the President	Board	Board Governance Committee	Board	President; Board
48.	Hiring Vice Presidents	President	Search Committee	Faculty; administrators; staff; students (as appropriate for the VP area)	Internal community
49.	Hiring Deans	President	Provost* and Search Committee	Faculty; admin; staff; students	Internal community
50.	Policies and procedures for personnel reviews (non-faculty)	President	Cabinet	Supervisors; Human Resources	Affected individuals
51.	Hiring full-time faculty	Provost	Dean; Search Committee* ¹²	Departmental faculty; students	Departmental faculty; students
52.	Hiring part-time faculty	Dean	Academic program chairs*	Departmental faculty	Departmental faculty
53.	Hiring administrators ¹³	Relevant VP	Appropriate supervisors and/or Search Committee	Relevant Supervisors and community members; Human Resources	faculty; admin; staff

¹² *Recommendation carries primary authority as defined in the 'Recommendation' section, above

¹³ Includes directors, associate VPs, assistant VPs, CIO, registrar, etc.

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		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
54.	Hiring staff	Head of Admin Unit	Admin Unit	Relevant personnel in unit; Human Resources	Relevant personnel in unit
55.	Appointment, promotion, tenure, emeritus, and sabbatical guidelines for faculty	President	Provost*; Status Committee; Handbook Committee; Academic Departments	Faculty	Faculty
56.	Promotion, tenure, emeritus status and sabbatical for individual faculty	Board	President; Provost; Status Committee* ¹⁴ ; Departments	Departmental faculty	Faculty
57.	Promotion and individual salary levels for staff and administrators	President	Relevant VP; Relevant Supervisor	HR	Supervisor and the individual
58.	Non-renewal and terminations for faculty	President ¹⁵	Provost*; Deans	Program Chair	Chair & the individual being considered
59.	Review of faculty grievance	President ¹⁶	Faculty Grievance Committee	Appropriate individuals as determined by the Grievance Committee	Grievant; Respondent; Chair of General Faculty Committee; Chair of Grievance Committee
60.	Terminations for staff and administrators	Relevant VP	Supervisor	Human Resources	Supervisor & Individual in question

¹⁴ *Recommendation carries primary authority as defined in the 'Recommendation' section, above

¹⁵ Tenured and tenure-track faculty terminated for cause have recourse to grievance proceedings as detailed in the Faculty Handbook. Tenured faculty additionally have recourse to review by the Faculty Status Committee, as detailed in the Faculty Handbook. Unionized faculty have recourse to grievance proceedings detailed in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

¹⁶ If the President disagrees with the Grievance Committee recommendation, the grievant may appeal to the Board

		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
61.	Terminations for VPs	President	President	Board Chair; Others as appropriate	Affected individuals
Compensation					
62.	Determining the faculty salary model	President	Faculty Compensation Working Group ¹⁷	Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee; faculty	Faculty; HR; Finance; OIE
63.	Setting total funds available for faculty compensation	Board	President; Faculty Compensation Working Group	Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee	Faculty; HR; Finance; OIE
64.	Allocating faculty salary funds	President	Faculty Compensation Working Group	Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee	Faculty; HR; Finance; OIE
65.	Setting the total funds available for non-faculty compensation	Board	President; Cabinet	Finance; HR	Affected employees; HR; Finance; OIE
66.	Allocating staff/admin salary funds	President	Appropriate VP	Head of administrative unit; HR	Council of Administrators and Staff; HR; Finance; OIE
67.	Setting cabinet salaries and grade	President	President	President (based on market data)	N/A
68.	Setting President's salary	Board	Board	Board (based on market data)	N/A

¹⁷ The Faculty Compensation Working Group includes the Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee plus the Provost, Deans, VP Finance, AVP for Institutional Effectiveness, and AVP for HR

		Decides	Recommends	Consulted	Informed
69.	Title change, salary adjustment for admin/staff roles	President	Appropriate VP; Supervisor	HR; Head of administrative unit	Relevant supervisor; individual in the role
Shared Governance Assessment					
70.	Periodically review/revise the decision matrix	President	Representatives from the General Faculty Committee, the Council Of Administrators and Staff Executive Committee, the Student Senate, the Provost, the Deans, and Cabinet.	Internal Community	Internal Community