

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS**  
**URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE**  
Senate Executive Committee  
(Final; Action)

SC.13.04      SEC Statement on Faculty Representation and Shared Governance

**BACKGROUND**

In recent years, the principles and practices of shared governance at the University of Illinois have been tested, and have held firm. A series of events over the past few years have revealed the centrality of shared governance to our institutional culture, and the damaging consequences that occur when that central principle is not respected. Yet they have also demonstrated the resilience of the shared governance model and the importance of keeping it strong. Just in the past three years, we have successfully faced challenges ranging from the cancellation of a flawed Global Campus plan to the resignations of two presidents and a chancellor in the midst of controversy.

In each case--Global Campus, the admissions scandal, and the recent Hogan/Troyer resignations--things went wrong when administration and faculty did not consult effectively, or when that consultation was not adequately respected. But in each case, also, it was the processes of shared governance and assertion of the key role of the Senate that identified the problems and pushed toward necessary resolutions. At the University of Virginia and other universities, a similar story can be told.

We are now entering a new phase in our history, one marked by a new President, a recently-appointed Chancellor, a new Vice-Chancellor of Research, and a new Provost. As we begin this new phase, this is an appropriate moment to reflect upon the meaning and importance of shared governance and the multiple ways in which it is enacted at the University of Illinois. While we note the essential role played by students and academic professionals in our campus senate and in the shared governance system, in this document we concentrate primarily on the trilateral relationship among the Board of Trustees, the faculty, and those faculty members serving in senior administrative positions.

**THE PRINCIPLES OF SHARED GOVERNANCE**

The principles of shared governance are expressed succinctly in the "Statement on Governance of Colleges and Universities," issued jointly in 1967 by the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. This Joint Statement clarifies that governance of institutions of higher education should be carried out in such a way as to recognize the "interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students, and others," which necessitates "adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort." While governing boards are ultimately responsible for guiding institutions of higher education, it is the faculty who should have primary responsibility for implementation of curriculum, faculty status, and other academic matters. As the Statement specifies, "the governing board and president should, on questions of faculty status, as in other matters where the faculty has primary responsibility, concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail." The

Statement emphasizes that governance of a college or university is a “joint effort;” that is, governance is shared among the members of the governing board, administrators, and faculty members.

#### SHARED GOVERNANCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

The *Statutes* of the University of Illinois reflect an understanding of governance that comports well with the 1967 Joint Statement. This document expresses the general principle that “as the responsible body in the teaching, research, and scholarly activities of the University, the faculty has inherent interests and rights in academic policy and governance.” From the principle that the responsibility for the creation of educational policy resides with the faculty flow a number of particular areas in which the faculty, represented by the senates, hold primary or sole statutory responsibility: not only creation and implementation of curricula, but also requirements for admission, requirements for degrees and certificates, the academic calendar, educational policy on student affairs, and recommendations for honorary degrees. It is important to note, however, that our *University Statutes* go considerably beyond the recommendations of the AAUP/ACE/AGB Joint Statement, specifying the core participation of faculty members in the creation of University-wide policy, in the governance and organization of academic departments—including budgetary oversight-- and in the appointment of administrative leaders (*University Statutes*, Article I, sections 1-3; Article III, section 2; <http://www.uillinois.edu/trustees/statutes.cfm>). Revision of the Statutes themselves may be initiated either by the Board or by one or more of the campus Senates; in either case, the Board must receive the advice of each of the campus Senates and the University Senates Conference.

#### SHARED GOVERNANCE IN ACTION

The University Senates Conference (USC), which is composed of elected representatives of each of the three campus senates, meets monthly with the President and, traditionally, with relevant members of the President’s Cabinet, including the Vice-Presidents (<http://www.usc.uillinois.edu/index.cfm>). At every meeting of the Board of Trustees, the USC chair and vice-chair, each of the senate chairs and vice-chairs, and official observers from the USC and from each of the senates are introduced as formal observers. In response to a request from USC, each Board agenda now includes a regular slot for a statement from USC on issues concerning the faculty. The current Board has also established the practice of cordial communication with faculty leaders, and in particular with the Chair of USC.

On each campus, the senators, democratically elected by their constituents, constitute the official voice of the faculty. The senate is not, of course, the only venue for faculty members to make their concerns known. But it is the senate's role to interact with the administration through our formal governance processes, and to create the conditions that allow a full range of faculty voices to be heard and respected.

In contrast to many academic senates, our campus senate has a formal voice in a wide range of matters, going considerably beyond the traditional scope of academic programs and curricula. The eighteen standing committees of the Senate deal with matters that include the traditional areas of Educational Policy and Admissions but that extend beyond them to encompass, for instance, Campus Operations, Budget and Benefits, and General University Policy (<http://www.senate.illinois.edu/>).

Our campus senate is unusual in its formal inclusion of the Chancellor and the Provost at our meetings. While neither is granted a vote on any body of the Senate, both attend meetings of the Senate Executive Committee and the Senate. The Chancellor presides at our Senate meetings. This arrangement allows senators to voice concerns directly to administrative leaders on a regular basis; likewise, it allows the Chancellor and the Provost to respond to faculty concerns and to share information with the elected

representatives, and through them to the campus at large.

The Chancellor and the Provost also meet regularly with the SEC chair, and with other Senate leaders who raise faculty concerns with our administrative colleagues. This allows the lines of communication to be kept open between formal meetings, and builds individual relationships that allow often-difficult topics to be engaged collegially. Matters of general concern to faculty that do not fall within the explicit charge of any of the eighteen Senate committees are typically discussed by the Senate Executive Committee and in these individual consultations with administrators. In sum, the practice on this campus, and at the university level, is to share the governance of *all* campus-wide matters that are relevant to our academic mission.

#### RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Shared governance as we enact it at the University of Illinois empowers faculty members while recognizing the legitimate areas of authority of the administration and the Board. This arrangement depends upon the mutual recognition of the equal importance and interdependence of each participant's respective areas of concern and responsibility. It is only through regular communication that the participants in shared governance can make their concerns known to each other, and resolve any conflicts that might arise when those concerns are not aligned.

Such communication must be based upon the interdependent principles of trust, respect, collegiality, and transparency. When participants do not show respect and collegiality, there can be no trust; when there is no trust, information will not freely be shared and there will be no transparency. Trust, respect, collegiality, and transparency cannot be mandated; each of them must be earned through their daily enactment. Once established, these qualities build upon one another; once broken, they can be difficult to re-establish.

It is important to note that relationships built on these qualities are not devoid of disagreement. On the contrary, shared governance discussions become vigorously contentious at times. Nevertheless, these disagreements and conflicts arise within a context that assumes that all participants share basic values and a commitment to the well-being of the institution.

Ultimately, shared governance is not just about governing documents; it is about people and the relationships they create and maintain with each other. It is strong when people share an honest commitment to these processes; it is threatened when people approach it only strategically or as a token obligation.

#### LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

The University of Illinois has come through a challenging period, and yet it continues to thrive. If the experience of the past few years has taught us anything, it is that we must all remain vigilantly protective of the shared governance system and conscientious in enacting its principles on a day-to-day basis. After all, it is that system, and those practices, that nurture the collegial environment that allows us to flourish. For all the difficulties we face, the most striking thing is the optimism of the institution and our continued commitment to excellence. We are proud of the central roles played by the Senate and the University Senates Conference in maintaining the integrity of our academic home during this period. We affirm the robust health and efficacy of shared governance, and look forward to strengthening our partnership with the Board and our administrative colleagues as we face the opportunities and challenges of the future together.