

Collegiality in The California State University System

.

Maintaining and Improving Shared Decision-Making in the California State University

The Academic Senate of the California State University does not believe that the shared decision-making of the collegial model and the shared decision-making of the collective bargaining mode are inherently incompatible. They represent *different* approaches to *different* types of decisions. By outlining the types of decisions appropriate to the collegial process and the usual steps involved in the collegial process for these decisions, the Academic Senate hopes that this statement will help to keep separate the two approaches to decision-making and simultaneously will help to maintain and improve the collegial process of shared decision-making. The three major types of decisions to be discussed below are those involving the curriculum, other aspects of academic policy, and the faculty itself.

Collegiality in Curricular Decisions

The university's curriculum is central to the operation of the institution and is the principal concern of the faculty. The curriculum is determined within the framework of established educational goals. Although there is great diversity in the California State University system, all campuses must conform to general policies established by law and by the California State University Board of Trustees. But within those limits, each campus develops its own mission statement, which is the product of faculty and administrators engaging in a collegial process.

The faculty have a professional responsibility to define and offer a curriculum of the highest academic quality. In some fields, this professional responsibility is exercised within accrediting guidelines developed and enforced by professional associations. This professional responsibility cannot, by its very nature, be delegated. The faculty, therefore, have primary responsibility for making curricular recommendations to the president. Normally, the president will accept the advice and recommendations of the faculty on curriculum matters. Faculty appropriately have this responsibility because they possess the expertise to judge best whether courses, majors, and programs adhere to scholarly standards.

Among curricular decisions for which faculty should have primary responsibility are:

- (1) The initiation of new academic courses and programs, and the discontinuance of academic courses and programs;

- (2) Course content, including choice of texts, syllabus design, assignments, course organization, and methods of evaluating students;
- (3) The designation of courses as degree or nondegree applicable, lower or upper division, or graduate level;
- (4) The content of the general education program within systemwide guidelines. Faculty should designate appropriate courses and establish the requirements for completion of the program. Faculty should be responsible for review and revision of the program;
- (5) The adoption, deletion, or modification of requirements for degree major programs, minor programs, formal concentrations within programs, credential programs, and certificate programs;
- (6) The establishment of minimum conditions for the award of certificates and degrees to students, and the approval of degree candidates; and
- (7) Recruitment decisions affecting curriculum.

Generally, since any curricular decision affects the primary mission of the university – the education of students – collegiality also demands student involvement in developing the curriculum.

Although practices on the various campuses will differ, decisions affecting curriculum will generally proceed through a process of (1) initiation by a faculty member or academic administrator, (2) approval by a department committee, (3) approval by curriculum committees at one or more levels, (4) approval by other relevant committees (general education, graduate programs, interdisciplinary), and (5) approval or review by the campus senates. The recommendation is then forwarded to the president.

The major limitations on faculty autonomy in curricular decision-making include constraints related to the general policies of the California State University system, the campus mission, budgets, and staffing limitations. Consultation among faculty and administrators should ensure that faculty are well aware of both the constraints on, and the possibilities for, program development and innovation. Faculty can be expected to make responsible judgments if they are in close consultation with administrators and thus kept knowledgeable of developments affecting curricular matters.

Collegiality in Academic Policy Decisions

Because the university's curriculum is of central concern to the faculty and because faculty have the primary responsibility in curricular decisions, it follows that faculty should have the major voice in academic policy decisions which closely affect the

curriculum, access to the curriculum, or the quality of the curriculum. All of the following are examples of academic policy:

- (1) Criteria, standards, and procedures for adoption, deletion, or modification of degree major programs, minor programs, formal concentrations within programs, credential programs, and certificate programs;
- (2) Grading practices and standards;
- (3) Criteria, standards, and procedures for earning credit or satisfying requirements outside the classroom, including competency examinations for English composition and in U.S. history and government, credit by examination, and credit for experiential learning;
- (4) Both short-run and long-range planning, including definition or modification of the campus mission statement, determination of the general scope and relative size or priority of campus programs, modifications of the campus academic master plan, annual campus allocation of faculty positions to schools or other units, and annual campus budget allocations;
- (5) Criteria, standards, and procedures for evaluating programs, the quality of instruction, faculty currency, and all other evaluations of the quality of the curriculum or of instruction;
- (6) Campus policies which govern resources which support or supplement the curriculum, especially the library and research facilities;
- (7) Campus policies which govern auxiliary institutions which support or supplement the curriculum, especially the campus foundation and the campus bookstore;
- (8) Student affairs policies, especially those governing financial aid, advisement, learning services, Equal Opportunity Programs, and related services which determine the extent to which students can avail themselves of the curriculum;
- (9) Campus and system policies governing withdrawal, probation, reinstatement, and disqualification which affect access to the curriculum and which can affect program quality;
- (10) Co-curricular activities, especially those which increase the likelihood that students will benefit fully from the curriculum or those which distract students from the curriculum, including intercollegiate athletic programs, and the relationship of those programs to the academic program and mission of the campus; and
- (11) The academic calendar, including the first and last days of instruction and the scheduling of final examinations.

Faculty and administrators recognize that such policy decisions dramatically affect the quality of education afforded to students and agree that these decisions will involve students.

The process of academic policy-making will vary from one campus to another and may vary from one type of decision to another on the same campus. Collegial patterns of decision-making, however, should be followed in all instances. On every California State University campus, the full faculty and the faculty's representative body, the campus senate/council, are the agencies for collegial decision-making. Some types of decisions may be made directly by the campus senate/council. In other instances, the faculty or campus senate/council may create a special body to develop academic policy in some area; if so, that body should include at least a majority of faculty representatives, chosen either by direct election or by the campus senate/council.

In the case of curricular decisions, the faculty should usually be the initiator of policy, within the constraints of budget, law, and system policy. By contrast, in the case of academic policy, proposals for changes in policy or for new policy may arise from academic administrators. The Chancellor or Board of Trustees may designate campus administrators as responsible for implementation of systemwide policies. In every instance, collegiality requires that the academic administrator work closely with the appropriate faculty representatives. When a change in policy or a new policy is needed, the faculty should be invited to participate fully in framing the policy. When an academic administrator presents a policy question to the faculty, the faculty should give it full consideration, and the academic administrator should participate as a colleague in order to arrive at agreement. Where there are differences of opinion, compromise should be sought. All academic administrators should be constantly alert to the policy implications of their decisions. If a decision may have policy dimensions or implications, the academic administrator should bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate faculty representatives.

Collegiality in Faculty Affairs

The faculty's professional competencies (derived from academic training, teaching experience, and continuing professional development) must play a significant and often decisive role in decisions regarding curriculum and academic policy. It is also the faculty who implement academic plans, programs, and curricula. Policies and procedures used in building, maintaining, and renewing the university faculty are vital determinants of the quality of the education the university provides to its students and to society.

The professional competencies that are central to curricular and academic policy decisions should be comparably decisive and significant in the genesis and implementation of faculty personnel policies, procedures, and criteria. Recommendations regarding hiring, retention or nonretention, awarding of tenure, promotion, and disciplinary actions are best left to faculty who are technically competent in their disciplines and in pedagogy and who are in the best position to observe and

make judgments on such matters as faculty performance and the specific staffing needs of academic programs.

Academic administrators may propose changes in faculty affairs policies. Proposals from administrators should be forwarded to the appropriate faculty committee for review and action in accordance with normal policy development procedures. The administrator should be invited to meet with the committee to discuss the proposal.

“Faculty affairs,” in this context, refers to those decisions regarding personnel policies, procedures, and criteria which have a potential impact on the quality of the curriculum. The following are examples of such faculty affairs decisions:

- (1) The establishment of criteria and standards for hiring, retention, tenure, and promotion;
- (2) The hiring of new faculty members, including the establishment of qualifications, development of procedures for implementing university policies such as affirmative action, evaluation of candidates, and the recommendation to the appropriate administrator;
- (3) The granting of tenure to faculty members, including the establishment of criteria and standards, the evaluation of candidates for tenure, and the recommendation to the appropriate administrator;
- (4) The development of appropriate criteria and standards for layoff and retrenchment;
- (5) The promotion of faculty members, including establishment of criteria and standards, the evaluation of candidates for promotion, and the recommendation to the appropriate administrator;
- (6) The selection of department chairs, including establishment of the election process and of criteria and standards, and the recommendation to the appropriate administrator;
- (7) The selection, evaluation, and retention of all academic administrators (i.e., those administrators who also hold an academic appointment and who have the potential for exercising retreat rights to a faculty position), including establishment of qualifications, composition of the search committee (which should always include a majority of faculty representatives), evaluation of candidates for appointment, and recommendation to the appropriate administrator; and
- (8) Recommendations regarding the selection, evaluation, and retention of nonacademic administrators whose duties involve substantial influence on the curriculum.

Obviously, while evaluating faculty for retention, promotion, and tenure, committees must take into account student perceptions.

The process of collegial decision-making in faculty affairs areas will vary somewhat, depending on the type of decision. In decisions involving hiring, retention, tenure, and promotion, the criteria and standards shall normally be determined through the campus senate/council and implemented through departmental committees and other appropriate faculty committees at levels above the department. Faculty committees must abide by all California State University and campus policies, such as affirmative action requirements. Administrators should assume that faculty committees are best qualified to judge the teaching effectiveness and other merits of the candidates.

Administrators should decide contrary to faculty recommendations only if there is clear indication of violation of system or campus policies or clear indication that the faculty committee failed to consider relevant information, in which instance the administrator should provide the faculty committee with written reasons for the decision and should refer the matter back to the faculty committee for reconsideration.

Department chairs have a substantial impact on the quality of the curriculum as well as on the quality of professional life. Because of their key role in implementing a range of decisions, department chairs should be acceptable to both the faculty of the department and to the university's administration. The campus senate/council should develop policy defining the minimum guidelines to follow in the selection of department chairs. When faculty act within those guidelines to recommend a candidate for appointment, administrators should assume that the faculty are best able to judge the effectiveness and merits of the candidates; administrators should deny a faculty choice only for cause and should explain fully any such decision to the faculty in question. Administrators should not impose a chair upon a faculty against its wishes except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be clearly stated in writing.

Because most academic administrators hold both academic and administrative positions, they have the option of exercising "retreat rights" and thereby becoming members of the instructional faculty. Academic administrators also have an impact on the curriculum. To maintain the quality of the instruction, faculty members should be closely involved in the evaluation and recommendation of candidates for academic administrative positions, both to evaluate the qualifications of the candidates, who might exercise retreat rights, and to evaluate the fitness of the candidates to make crucial decisions affecting the curriculum.

Conclusion

Authority in the modern public university derives from two quite different sources: (a) from the knowledge of subject matter and the pedagogic expertise of the faculty and (b) from the power vested by law and administrative code in governing boards and administrators. The collegial decision-making process evolved nearly a century ago as a means of reconciling these two types of authority. Collegial governance must resolve

conflict within the university, while preserving respect and understanding among the faculty, trustees, administrators, students, and alumni.

Central to collegiality and shared decision-making is tolerance, which might be defined as a civil regard for differing opinions and points of view. Tolerance welcomes diversity and actively sponsors its opinions. The collegium must be the last public bastion of respect for individuals, whether they are members of the faculty, student body, staff, alumni, administration, or Board of Trustees.

The faculty must exercise its authority responsibly and recognize the legitimacy of administrative authority. If faculty members fail to act responsibly, academic administrators have an obligation to intervene. If an academic administrator fails to act responsibly, the faculty is professionally obligated to seek rectification of the problem. At all times, the various entities should try to reach an accommodation which is sensitive to the concerns of the university's constituencies.

Academic administrators and the faculty may not always be able to achieve consensus, even when they approach a problem in a properly collegial state of mind and when they exert their best efforts to achieving consensus through rational dialogue. In such circumstances, the appropriate administrator should meet with faculty representatives to discuss their differences. The more closely a decision affects the curriculum, the more the administrator should defer to the views of the faculty. Administrators should reject faculty proposals if the proposals are contrary to system policy or law or if they cannot be implemented due to budgetary constraints, but administrators should not reject faculty proposals merely out of differences of opinion. When there is disagreement on an issue, all parties should undertake a serious reconsideration of their positions.

The California State University's system administration is also important in encouraging collegial decision-making. California State University directives requiring campus implementation should always include sufficient time to allow for full consideration through the collegial decision-making process. Shared decision-making is time consuming, especially when the issue is complex. When California State University administrators direct campus administrators to develop campus policy and specify short timelines, they place the campus administrator in an untenable position. Time constraints are an unacceptable reason for bypassing full and collegial consideration.

The California State University administration should encourage collegial patterns of thought and behavior in other ways as well. It should itself be a model of collegiality, limiting its managerial mode to the bargaining table and to the working conditions specified in the contracts. It should specifically encourage all campus presidents to do the same and should incorporate appropriate references to the key role of the faculty and to the process of collegial decision-making into all memoranda and directives which address curricular, academic, or faculty matters. Ability to sustain good collegial relations through shared decision-making should be one of the most important criteria in evaluating campus presidents and candidates for appointment as campus presidents.

In fostering collegial, shared governance, all members of the university community must realize that conflict within the university is inevitable. The challenge is to resolve conflict or at least bring it to closure, while maintaining due regard for the prerogatives, expertise, and responsibilities of those involved. Disagreements must be vigorously and openly debated, then resolved through procedures of shared decision-making. Differing perspectives must be tolerated and respected. The university suffers seriously when faculty-administrative relations erode to "us versus them." All members of the university community must treat one another with respect and honesty.

Mechanisms for shared decision-making exist systemwide and on each campus. What is needed now is the commitment of students, faculty, administrators, and the Board of Trustees to use these institutions in accordance with the principles discussed in this document. By so doing, they will accomplish the sensitive, thoughtful resolution of the inevitable conflicts that arise in the university, and they will thereby create a better university.

(This document was approved by the CSU Academic Senate in March 1985.)