Shared Governance:
Finding Common Ground

In this newsletter, several members of our community describe their views of and experiences with shared gov-
ernance: past, present, and future Faculty Senate presidents, faculty members, and the President of the DU chap-
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sible, conclude the newsletter. Our hopes are that these pieces will generate discussion among the faculty on
campus, so that we start finding common ground in our understanding of and expectations about shared gov-
ernance. Join the conversation at the Faculty Forum Weblog available on the Faculty Senate website,
http://www.du.edu/facsen/.

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Is the Faculty Senate an Effective Partner in Shared Governance?
The Faculty Senate President Perspective

Michael Levine-Clark
Faculty Senate President, 2008-2010

I get asked a lot by non-academic friends what the Faculty Senate does. I explain that it is a crucial piece of the
shared governance structure in a university; that it serves as a forum for the faculty to discuss issues and help
formulate policies relating to faculty status, curricular issues, and any other topics of broad concern to the fac-
ulty; and that it provides a formal voice for the faculty. And then I usually have to admit that it is not as active a
body as I wish it were.

Most of the business of the Faculty Senate at DU seems to be in reaction to reports, policies, and procedures gen-
erated elsewhere in the university. For some of these . a tobacco-free campus, new general education require-
ments . there is lively debate. Most of the time, though, we listen, we ask a few questions, and then we serve as
a rubber stamp. I was concerned about this for a while; I found our inability to serve as a proactive body to
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The literature on faculty senates is fairly depressing.[1] Senates are characterized as ineffective, dysfunctional-

One Building, Two Stories

Scott Leutenegger
Professor, Computer Science Department
and
Alvaro Arias
Associate Professor, Mathematics

In 2001 the department of mathematics and computer science, then within the Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering (NSME) division, split into a mathematics department (now in NSM) and a computer science department (now in SECS) due to diverging academic interests. These two departments still share a building, but, shared faculty governance differences have resulted in very different experiences. We believe comparing and contrasting these two departments helps explain where shared governance stands currently at DU: significantly different manifestations dependent on the unit. By comparing these two units we provide a glimpse of the variety of shared faculty governance on campus and possible consequences.

Mathematics has a shared faculty governance model, where faculty members have primary responsibilities in academic matters. This model has been implemented by senior faculty members and by the Deans of NSM. The model has created a positive environment that is conducive to research, teaching, and service and it has paid off. At the split, math was down to 6 faculty members, 16 majors, and 1 graduate student. It now has 12 faculty

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governance is not designed to give more power to the faculty or to weaken deans. It is designed to create environments conducive to teaching, research, and service because this is in the best interest of the university. This is why these principles were formulated also by university administrators.

These examples also illustrate the different models of faculty governance at DU. The most important decisions of shared governance, or lack thereof, take place at the division or college level. Our provost and chancellor had

posal was seen by some as illegitimate, as publicly undermining the work of GERC, and as violating faculty
governance and process. I also learned that discussion in some units was actively discouraged for fear of legiti-
mizing that which was considered illegitimate. Clearly, the document was not received in the spirit in which it
was intended. All of this was astonishing to me. Floating a counterproposal might have been an audacious act,

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than silence. When the time arrived for a faculty vote on the GERC proposal, I emailed Faculty Senate col-
leagues to thank them for their indulgence and to express concern about what appeared to be active suppression
of dialogue about a curricular matter for which faculty have collective responsibility. There was another deafen-

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ommendations regarding any aspect of the life of the university and to communicate these recommendations to

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failing in our responsibility as educators.

2. Collaborating to Make Policy

When I became Faculty Senate president in 2006 I inherited from my two immediate predecessors the challenge

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within that section of the Faculty Senate Constitution that describes the function of the Faculty Review Commit-

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tion in decision making and sharing information is nothing short of remarkable, if not shocking. That is the definition of transparency, of a company with no secrets, one in which every employee is empowered to speak the truth. In sum, this most un-Creon-• ' ” Ž 1 ‹ Ž ' Š Ÿ ' ˜ › 1 ' œ 1 ' Š • 1 • ' Ž 1 Š — Œ ' Ž — • 1 › Ž Ž ” œ 1 Œ Š • • Ž • 1 Ÿ ' › • ž ˜ ž œ 1 • Ž Š • Ž › o

Hopefully, the above discussion has created a better understanding of what shared governance means. The path to Š Œ ' ' Ž Ÿ ' — • 1 Š 1 Œ ž • • ž › Ž 1 ˜ • 1 Œ Š — • ˜ › 1 › Ž • ' Ž œ 1 ˜ — 1 • Ž Ÿ Ž • ˜ ™ ' — • 1 Š 1 Œ ˜ – – ˜ — 1 ž — • Ž › œ • to do this is to engage each unit in the development of a written social contract. Ideally, the social contract will look th e

Communications

We will communicate:

- With respect.
- Openly with full disclosure.
- In an inclusive manner.
- By listening to all ideas without initial evaluation.
- To the broader community, up and down the organization, and ask for input from all stakeholders and constituencies.
- By supporting the decisions of the group in our communications with others .

Results Orientation

We will:

- Embrace change and be willing to re-invent ourselves.
- Focus on our priorities and make sure the rest of the organization understands the mission of the College and
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- Collaborate and synchronize our efforts.
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