

# Shared Governance

**It's Happening Here.**

Faculty Personnel Office  
Office of the Provost



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LOUISVILLE**<sup>®</sup>

*“Shared governance is a cornerstone of the academy, and the University of Louisville is committed to a strong partnership among its administration and its faculty, staff and students. Together, we are making important decisions that will impact the success of our students and colleagues. We take this commitment seriously as we continue to grow as a preeminent metropolitan research university. At UofL, we’re all in this together.”*

—Dr. James R. Ramsey, President

*“UofL’s commitment to collegial governance is exceptionally strong compared to benchmarks, and the faculty share responsibility for ensuring it remains vibrant and effective. We encourage all faculty to become active in unit governance and to consider service on the faculty senate.”*

—Melissa Laning, Chair of the Faculty Senate 2008–2010,  
and Robert Staat, Chair of the Faculty Senate 2010–



## What Is Shared Governance?

Shared governance, sometimes also called collegial governance, is the set of principles and practices through which faculty and staff members participate in the important decisions regarding the operation of the university. Collegial governance is a system based on the idea that authority and responsibility are shared among colleagues, some of whom are primarily faculty members and some of whom are primarily administrators. Successful shared governance depends on the good faith consultation among these colleagues prior to decision-making; such consultation should also include staff members and students whenever policy or personnel decisions are likely to affect them and whenever policy or personnel documents do not explicitly exclude them.

## The University of Louisville's Commitment to Shared Governance

On July 23, 2001, the Board of Trustees endorsed a position paper on university governance that was produced by the Coalition of Senate and

Faculty Leadership (COSFL) in the state of Kentucky. COSFL's paper was itself an endorsement of the 1966 "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities" jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). These documents establish that collegial governance should be characterized by the following principles:

- The recognition of and respect for the many and varied roles that members of the academic community perform
- The timely disclosure of information needed to participate meaningfully in the discourse that makes good policy and practice
- The opportunity for members of the academic community to provide input for decisions that will affect them before those decisions are made
- The principle of dissent, which makes it imperative that dissent from the majority view be respected by all

As a practical matter, shared governance in a complex institution is seldom practiced in the committee of the whole, but instead, the various stakeholders speak through groups or offices: governing boards, administrative officers, faculty, staff, and students and their representative bodies.

## The Redbook and University Governance

*The Redbook* is the official statement of the organizational structure, governance rules and procedures, and the university-wide policies of the University of Louisville; the most up-to-date version can be found on the Provost's website at <http://louisville.edu/provost/redbook>. *The Redbook* recognizes the complicated network of relationships between the Board of Trustees, the president and the executive vice president and university provost, vice presidents, deans, chairs and other administrators, faculty, staff and students, and establishes a system of shared governance. Further, *The Redbook* establishes the Faculty Senate (3.4.2), the Staff Senate (5.7.1) and the Student Government Associa-

tion (6.5) as the official representatives of the faculty, staff and student bodies, and each senate is responsible for eliciting and expressing the opinions of its constituency on matters of concern to the whole. The principle of administrative consultation with appropriate individuals, groups and organizations is explicit throughout *The Redbook* (e.g., 2.1.2.B, D, H, K {duties of the president}; 2.2.2, 3.2.1, 3.3.5 {appointments of provost and vice presidents, deans, and chairs}).

## Shared Governance in the Units

The University of Louisville currently has 13 academic units in which faculty may hold appointments (e.g., Arts and Sciences, Medicine, Law; see *The Redbook* 3.1.1. for a complete list). *The Redbook* specifies that each unit's faculty "shall have general legislative powers over all matters pertaining to its own personnel policies, criteria, and procedures, to its own meetings, and to the admission requirements, curricula, instruction, examinations, and recommendations to the Board of Trustees for granting degrees in its own academic unit" (3.3.2). Units must have by-laws detailing organizational and governance structures that are consistent with the provisions of shared governance specified in *The Redbook* (3.1.3) and personnel documents detailing criteria for faculty status and appointment, tenure and promotion reviews, annual reviews, and career reviews that are consistent with those specified in *The Redbook*. Personnel documents and by-laws should be published on each unit's web site, but they are also available on the provost's website at <http://louisville.edu/provost/faculty-personnel/unit>. Changes to unit personnel documents and by-laws are reviewed by the Faculty Senate and the provost's office before they are forwarded to the president and Board of Trustees for approval.

As noted above, *The Redbook* 3.3.2 gives unit faculties legislative authority over personnel policies, governance and curriculum, among other things. Thus, unit faculty share responsibility for 1) academic matters, including academic planning, the approval of academic degree programs, curriculum decisions, admissions and graduation requirements,

issues related to academic freedom and policies regarding student grievances about academic work; 2) personnel matters, including academic personnel decisions (appointment, tenure and promotion, dismissal of tenured faculty), establishing criteria for review of faculty and for distributing salary increases and participation in the grievance process; and 3) governance matters, including development and approval of unit by-laws and rules for meeting, and the establishment of standing committees and other procedures by which the unit will govern itself. While each unit is different in the procedures it establishes for governing itself, each must do so in ways consistent with the policies and procedures outlined in *The Redbook*.

## What Is My Role in Shared Governance?

For shared governance to be successful, each member of the university community must understand his or her role, must know the policies outlined in *The Redbook* and unit by-laws and personnel documents, and must take responsibility for his or her part.

**University administrators** (the president and the provost, as well as vice presidents) provide leadership in their particular areas of responsibility. Typically, the president and the provost must make final decisions for which their offices have been delegated responsibility, but such actions are usually taken after consultation with various concerned individuals, groups or organizations. The president and provost regularly consult with the Faculty Senate, often through the executive committee, on academic and research matters, on economic welfare issues and on changes to administrative structures or policies. The president and provost also may appoint university-wide committees, which include faculty (and staff and students when appropriate), to address such matters.

**Unit administrators** (deans and divisional or departmental officers) likewise provide leadership and must make final decisions for which their positions have been delegated authority, but they should do so by working through the appropriate faculty committees within their

units, departments or divisions as outlined in their unit's by-laws. Deans on Belknap Campus report directly to the executive vice president and university provost, while deans on the Health Sciences Campus report to the executive vice president for health affairs; divisional or departmental officers report to the dean of their unit. Faculty committees typically include elected members.

**Tenured faculty members** have a responsibility to serve on departmental, unit and university committees as either appointed or elected members. In such service, they are expected to voice their opinions honestly and to serve the best interests of the institution as a whole rather than their own personal interests. Faculty members are expected to understand the policies of the university, particularly those in *The Redbook*, and to participate in the governance of their units and the university at large. In particular, unit faculties have responsibility for academic matters, faculty personnel matters and governance.

**Probationary faculty members** are usually asked to serve on fewer committees than tenured faculty (and may actually be prohibited from serving on some committees, such as departmental or unit personnel committees), but they should be free to contribute to conversations on academic and governance matters. Since proficiency in service is a requirement of all those who expect to be tenured, probationary faculty should participate in some service and governance activities. They should consult with their chairs about service assignments.

**Term and part-time faculty members** may participate in some service and governance activities, depending on the unit's by-laws and the individual faculty member's contract or work assignment. Part-time faculty may be elected to the Faculty Senate.

## **The Role of the Faculty Senate**

As noted previously, the Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate and the Student Government Association are the official, elected represen-

tatives of the faculty, staff and students. The Faculty Senate is responsible for reviewing policies and documents that affect the faculty and making recommendations regarding these policies to the university administration. Similarly, a primary responsibility of the senate is eliciting and representing the opinions, suggestions and recommendations of the faculty on all matters of concern to the faculty as a whole; the senate responds to questions or issues that arise from individuals or groups of faculty members, particularly when those questions or issues apply to the faculty as a whole. The Faculty Senate also makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees about the establishment, suspension or termination of academic programs. Finally, the Faculty Senate and its executive committee respond to requests for consultation from the administration, Board of Trustees and others.

The Faculty Senate has 70 members, including 62 full-time faculty members who serve three-year terms and six part-time faculty members who serve one-year terms. The Staff Senate and Student Government Association each have one representative on the Faculty Senate.

## **Good Faith and the Principle of Dissent**

Successful shared governance depends on all participants acting in good faith, with everyone having enough information to offer sound opinions. Shared governance is sometimes a slow process, and consultation with all concerned individuals, groups and organizations is not always possible, but every effort should be made by both administrators and faculty to share information in a timely fashion. Universities have a unique mission—the creation and dissemination of knowledge—and shared governance is a means of ensuring that academic decision-making on matters such as curriculum, the allocation of resources and the appointment, promotion and tenure of academic colleagues is largely independent of short-term managerial, political or financial concerns. The

American Federation of Teachers' Higher Education Program and Policy Committee recently issued a statement on the importance of shared governance and concluded that "Shared governance is vital to maintain the academic integrity of our colleges and universities, to prevent the pressures of commercialization from distorting the institution's educational mission or eroding standards and quality, and to uphold the ideals of academic freedom and democratic practice."

Finally, in a system of shared governance, respect for the diversity of opinion is of the utmost importance. The Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff and students will not always be of one voice on matters of policy and practice, and dissent from the majority view must be respected by all involved. No stakeholder should fear retaliation for expressing dissent from the majority opinion or from the opinion of a superior.

Shared governance is happening at the University of Louisville. All of us must do our part to uphold the ideals of academic freedom and democratic practice inherent in a system of shared governance.

### **Links to Works Cited**

"Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities."

American Association of University Professors

<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/governancestatement.htm>

"Shared Governance in Colleges and Universities: A Statement by the Higher Education Program and Policy Council."

The American Federation of Teachers

<http://www.aft.org/pdfs/highered/sharedgovernance0806.pdf>

*The Redbook*

<http://louisville.edu/provost/redbook>

Unit Personnel Documents and By-laws

<http://louisville.edu/provost/faculty-personnel/unit>



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