

# **Sense of the Senate Resolution on Improving Shared Governance**

## **A. Sources of the Resolution**

This resolution is presented by the University Senate's Fringe Benefits Committee and is based on

1. The results of the two, most-recent President and Executive Team Evaluations conducted by the Senate.
2. Our own experience in developing our October 9, 2013 recommendation on possible changes in healthcare-insurance benefits.
3. Our collective experience.
4. Our reading of history.

## **B. The Resolution Itself**

We propose that the University Senate initiate changes to improve shared governance at Michigan Tech, for example, by amending, as appropriate, the University Senate Constitution and Bylaws, by introducing new Senate proposals, and by amending existing proposals.

## C. A Few Key Points in the History of University Governance

### 13th Century

“[T]he universities of the middle ages managed after a while to bring about a structure allowing corporations of scholars and teachers to govern their own affairs, with the help of a number of academic officials who were elected by and from the university’s own members. But beyond this there is some early evidence that a special group of non-academic functionaries was also growing that could take care of a number of practical tasks. The most important of these were the beadles. . . . it became necessary to give [these functionaries] special status within the university structure. . . . this right seems to have been abused.”

— Olaf Pedersen, *The First Universities: Studium Generale and the Origins of University Education in Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1997)

## 1915

- American Association of University Professors (AAUP) formed: 1915 Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure

## 1966

- *The Managerial Revolution In Higher Education*, Francis E. Rourke and Glenn E. Brooks (Johns Hopkins Press):

“The most paradoxical development in higher education in recent years has been the fact that the status of the individual faculty member has been growing on university campuses even while his participation in university government has been declining.”

- AAUP Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities

**2002**

- American Federation of Teachers (AFT):  
“Shared Governance in Colleges and  
Universities: A Statement by the Higher  
Education Program and Policy Council”

## **D. A Brief History of Michigan Tech's Commitment to Shared Governance**

According to David T. Halkola's history, *Michigan Tech Centennial, 1885-1985*, Michigan Tech President (1956-1964) J. Robert Van Pelt "was concerned about the needs of the faculty and its status. He wanted to include the faculty more directly in academic affairs and, early in his administration, he encouraged the establishment of a faculty senate. The Senate constitution was accepted by the Board in June 1958, with the words, "the Board welcomes the establishment of the Senate as a major forward step in the evolution of the college's guidance of academic policy."

Later, Halkola writes, “During the Van Pelt years, the status of the faculty improved, as an advisory group to the administration, with the creation of a Faculty Senate. Some faculty members felt the Senate did not really reflect the grassroots membership and that it was heavily dominated by the administration, since the president of the University was also the president of the Senate. Therefore, a movement was started that carried over into [Raymond L.] Smith’s presidency to bring about a more representative Faculty Senate which the administration could not dominate. The faculty accepted the concept of a senate with representatives from each department as well as some members elected-at-large. The new Senate constitution was approved by the Board in the spring of 1966. [See Senate Proposal 1-62.]

Beginning in 1995—under then-President Curtis J. Tompkins—the Senate experimented for two years with a constitution that included professional staff (see Senate Proposal 1-94). As part of this transition, the University broadened its commitment to the principles of shared governance. Below are two related excerpts from the section on Governance in Michigan Tech’s 1997 Self-Study Report:

After a two-year trial period under a new constitution which broadened participation by professional staff in the Senate, the 1995 Senate constituents voted in Spring 1997 to affirm the new constitution and it was approved by the Board of Control in June 1997. This constitution clarified and expanded the role of faculty and professional staff in governance of the University. The level of involvement of the University Senate in shared governance activities increased under the new Senate constitution.

[S]hared governance . . . is defined in the *Faculty Handbook* [1.2A, Section 1.4] and on the [Administration web page](#) as “the faculty, staff, and the administration participating cooperatively in developing policies for governance of the University.” Effective governance is considered a product of trust and shared responsibility. Shared governance is also stated as an objective in the strategic plan: Involve the faculty fully in the governance of the University (subgoal 4.2.2).

## **E. Three Warrants for Shared Governance**

### **1. More Just Decisions**

People have a right to participate in the framing of decisions that will have a profound impact on their lives and wellbeing—either by directly participating in the decision themselves or by having some reasonable expectation that their views and concerns will be carefully considered by those who have legal, decision-making authority.

## **2. Wiser Decisions: The Wisdom of Crowds**

In 1954, in explaining why he believed that there should be broader public dialogue on the further development of nuclear weapons, Robert Oppenheimer said that some of our decisions both involve complicated technical information and have important moral and human consequences.

He went on to say that there is danger in making such decisions in secret “not because the people who [made] the decisions were not wise, but because . . . the very absence of criticism and discussion tended to corrode the decision making process.”

### 3. More Financially Sound Decisions

This follows from the above. No one small group of people can possibly consider all of the possible implications—including financial implications—of any complex decision.

Consider, for example,

- The potential impacts of *moral hazard* and *behavioral hazard*
- Whether faculty and staff find salary and fringe benefits to be of equal importance and, hence, the effects that reducing benefits might have on recruiting and retention.

## **F. Concerns about Current Practice**

During the September 25, 2013 meeting of the University Senate, Administrative Policy Committee Chair Gerald Caneba read into the record summaries of comments from the Senate's 2012-13 President and Executive Team Online Evaluation. For comparative purposes, the Academic Policy Committee's report also included summary comments from the 2011-2012 survey, one of which was, "There is the sense that the university is drifting towards an administration-driven organization."

Collectively, the comments from both surveys suggest (fairly or not) a widely held belief that senior members of the University administration exercise arbitrary authority; hence, a failure of shared governance.

## **Excerpts from the Summaries of Comments on the 2012-13 President and Executive Team Online Evaluations**

Lack of transparency; failure to listen to the university community; lack of consideration to outside ideas; decides against prevailing opinion; erosion of credibility; low morale; lack of communication; budgeting process not perceived as transparent; an elevated level of mistrust, skepticism, and cynicism about how the university has been handling its finances; persistent charges of nepotism, cronyism, and favoritism; Executive Team does not seem to have the confidence of faculty and staff; The grievance process is not perceived to be fair, useful, and cited not to have resulted in improvement in working conditions; There is the perception that open two-sided communication is either inadequate, superficially used, or used as smokescreen to justify decisions that are already made

## **Excerpts from Summary of Comments from 2011-2012**

Communication was primarily portrayed as a one-way mass-assembly communication rather than two-way communication between administration and faculty/staff; There is the sense that the university is drifting towards an administration-driven Organization; Comments indicate wide resentment over the alleged lack of transparency on operations, budget, reward system, and various decisions in hiring more administrative personnel; Many respondents stated that there is not enough transparency; Some commented that, while the final result is communicated, there should be more discussion and input from the University community throughout the budgeting process

## **G. Shared Responsibilities for the Success of Shared Governance**

If faculty and staff value shared governance, then we must be willing to do our part. The above results are not likely to change unless and until structural changes more clearly define the limits of administrative power. Hence, the University Senate does not well serve either the University or the University administration by failing to introduce such changes, as, for example, by amending, as appropriate, the University Senate Constitution and Bylaws, by introducing new Senate proposals, and by amending existing proposals.

## **H. Shared Governance and the University Senate Constitution**

Excerpts from the Constitution of the University Senate of Michigan Technological University  
<http://www.admin.mtu.edu/admin/prov/facbook/app/g/gapp.htm>

“The Senate shall have the responsibility and the authority to review and establish policy in some matters, and to review and make recommendations in other matters.” (III.B)

### **The Senate’s A-List**

Those matters for which the Senate “shall have the responsibility and the authority to review and establish policy,” commonly referred to as the Senate’s “A-list,” include the following:

#### **1. Matters of Academic Policy and Procedures**

- All curricular matters, including establishment, dissolution, and changes in degree programs.
- Requirements for certificates and academic

degrees.

- Regulations regarding attendance, examinations, grading, scholastic standing, probation, and honors.
- Teaching quality and the evaluation of teaching.
- All matters pertaining to the academic calendar.
- The appointment, promotion, tenure, dismissal, and leaves of the academic faculty.
- Criteria for positions that are to be accorded academic rank.
- Academic freedom: rights and responsibilities.
- Regulations concerning the awarding of honorary degrees.
- Procedures for the selection of Deans and Department Chairs.
- Requirements and criteria for unit charters for each academic department.
- Other areas under authority as may be granted by the Board of Control, the University President, or their designated representative.

## **2. Matters of Research Policy and Procedures**

- All issues and performance other than the allocation and distribution of resources.

## **3. Matters of Policy and Procedures Concerning Professional Staff**

- All issues of concern only to professional staff.

## **4. Other Matters of Policy and Procedure**

- Internal function of the Senate, including By-laws, committee structure, etc.
- Other areas under authority as shall be granted by the Board of Control, the University President, or their designated representative.

## **The Senate's B-List**

Those matters for which the Senate “shall have the responsibility and the authority . . . to review and make recommendations,” commonly referred to as the Senate’s “B-list,” include the following:

### **1. Matters of Academic Policy and Procedures**

- Academic organization, including the establishment or elimination of schools, colleges, or departments, and the reorganization of the academic structure.

### **2. Matters of Research Policy and Procedures**

- Allocation and distribution of unrestricted funds made available to the university for discretionary allocation in support of research or scholarly work.

### **3. Matters of Policy and Procedures Concerning Professional Staff**

None listed.

## **4. Other Matters of Policy and Procedure**

- Fringe benefits.
- Institutional priorities.
- Allocation and utilization of the university's human, fiscal, and physical resources.
- The J.R. Van Pelt Library, computing facilities, audiovisual support, E.R. Lauren Bookstore, Seaman Museum, etc. as they affect scholarly, instructional, and research activities.
- Admission standards and procedures.
- Student financial aid.
- Selection of the University President, the Provost, and other major university-wide administrators.
- Administrative procedures and organizational structure.
- The evaluation of administrators.
- All areas of student affairs not mentioned specifically above, including their effect on the educational process and on academic achievement.

## **I. Therefore,**

We propose that the University Senate initiate changes to improve shared governance at Michigan Tech, for example, by amending, as appropriate, the University Senate Constitution and Bylaws, by introducing new Senate proposals, and by amending existing proposals.