

Statement on Shared Governance at San Jose State University

INTRODUCTION

At San José State University, we are proud of our long history of faculty, students, staff, and administrators working together in the best interest of the university.

The California State University (CSU), the California Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA), and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) all recognize that shared governance is a fundamental operating principle in institutions of higher learning. The *CSU Report on the Board of Trustees Ad Hoc Committee on Governance, Collegiality, and Responsibility* (1985) defines shared governance broadly as a “complex web of decision making and responsibility that translates into university policy or action” and emphasizes that collegial governance “allows the academic community to work together to find the best answers to issues facing the institution.”

The rapidly changing landscape of higher education makes the need for effective governance at SJSU greater today than ever in our history. The foundation for effectiveness in this environment is an agreement among faculty, staff, students, and administrators as to what shared governance means and how it translates into practice on any given campus.

In their 1985 report, the CSU Board of Trustees delineated the complexity of decision-making in the CSU and provides meaningful guidelines for collegiality and shared governance.

Moreover, in considering the meaning of shared governance, Tierney and Minor’s (2003) proposed three modalities:

- x Shared governance means *fully collaborative decision making*. The faculty, staff, students, and administration make decisions jointly; consensus is the goal.
- Shared governance means *consultative decision making*. Many individuals and groups may be brought into the process; however, the focus is on sharing information and discussion rather than joint decision-making.
- Shared governance means *distributed decision making*. Discrete groups are responsible for specific issues and decisions, giving faculty, students, or staff the right to make decisions in some areas, and administration in others.

Effective shared governance depends on judicious use of all three modalities, consistent with the following five Principles of Engagement:

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4. Consult, collaborate, and cooperate.
5. Foster healthy conflict and respectful debate

Establishing the structures and authority of faculty and academic senates is an important exercise; however, culture is an equal contributor to effective governance (Tierney & Minor, 2004). In fact, the “soft” aspects of governance, such as trust and social capital, can be more consequential than the “hard”, structural aspects of governance (i.e., procedures of the Academic Senate or other formal representative bodies).

The following SJSU principles of shared governance recognize both structural and cultural aspects of shared governance:

Guiding Principles of Shared Governance

1. Collegiality

Fundamentally, a commitment to collegiality and collaboration lies at the heart of all effective shared governance structures. As defined by the CSU Board of Trustees” (1985), collegiality “consists of a shared decision-making process and a set of values which regard the members of the various university constituencies as essential for the success of the academic enterprise.” Collegiality is therefore driven by core values that include a basic respect for shared decision-making, respect for differing points of view and assigned responsibilities, respect for diversity, and mutual trust based on

consultation should be utilized, as well as new structures (e.g., focus groups, ad-hoc committees, etc.) when needed. The value of the faculty voice in budgetary matters is recognized, “particularly those directly affecting the areas in which the faculty has primary responsibility.”

At SJSU, the Academic Senate serves as the principal agency for the formulation and recommendation of University policy. Academic and curricular matters, professional standards, governance issues, student affairs, and additional subjects identified by the *CSU Statement on Collegiality and the California Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act* are appropriately the concern of university policy formulated by the Academic Senate and recommended to the President. Other administrative regulations that do not fall within these areas may be issued as Presidential Directives to distinguish them from policies that require a Senate recommendation. Whether formulating policy, issuing directives, or making decisions of less formal character, both the Senate and the Administration should consult widely with those affected by decisions. In this capacity, the Senate is an essential, although not exclusive, body for consultative processes.

References

AAUP Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities (1966).
<http://www.aaup.org/report/1966-statement-government-colleges-and-universities>

California Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA, 2013).
<http://www.perb.ca.gov/laws/HEERA.aspx>

California State University Report on the Board of Trustees Ad Hoc Committee on
