

Shared Governance Reimagined

Background

In the spirit of continuous improvement, Yavapai College in 2017 assessed its shared governance process to ensure that internal constituencies were engaged and satisfied with the institution's shared decision making efforts. President Dr. Wills put forth the topic at the Executive Leadership Team's (ELT) summer retreat and to the campus at large at the Spring 2017 Convocation. Feedback and conversations resulting from the Fall 2017 Convocation and subsequent meetings and discussions between faculty, staff, and administrative bodies highlighted competing views of shared governance. To better understand the point of view of different constituencies it was decided to conduct a campus wide survey on shared governance.

Shared Governance Survey

The College at the suggestion of Dr. Pearcy adopted a shared governance survey developed by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. The survey was sent electronically to all Yavapai College employees. At the heart of the study were questions that asked how shared governance currently operated and how it should operate. The consensus among faculty and staff groups was that the current model was one of governance as consultation, requiring those parties responsible for making decisions to consult with others and consider their input. The preferred model of shared governance was a system incorporating open communication and creating a culture of shared responsibility for the good of students and the college, and building a system of checks and balances to ensure the institution stays student- and mission-centered.

Dr. Pearcy shared the survey findings and a shared governance decision-making matrix (developed and used at Pacific University) with the college community at the spring 2018 convocation. Based on the campus discussions and the survey results, Dr. Wills commissioned a Blue Ribbon Committee to work on a redesign of the College's shared governance model.

Blue Ribbon Committee

Drs. Matt Pearcy, and Tom Hughes, Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research, were appointed as co-chairs for the Blue Ribbon Committee (BRC). The BRC membership was selected to be representative of all stakeholders at YC. The committee was composed of the following members.

Matt Pearcy, Professor of Biology	Tom Hughes, Institutional Effectiveness/Research
Vikki Bentz, Professor of Accounting	Heather Mulcaire, Assoc. Dean of Student Success
Dave Gorman, Professor of Mathematics	Patrick Burns, Chief Information Officer
Jeb Bevers, Professor of Biology	Lisa Schlegel, Special Events Coordinator
Tara O'Neill, Professor of Education	Dennis Garvey, Dean of Lifelong Learning
Karla Phillips, Associate Dean of Career and Technical Education	
Karen Jones, Executive Assistant to the President	

The BRC's charge was twofold: 1) To develop a new statement on shared governance; 2) To create a matrix outlining decisions, decision makers, and decision-making responsibilities.

The BRC began its work by reviewing the survey findings and conducting a literature review on the topic. Two salient points were identified in the committee's research. First, the need to strengthen the role of staff and students in shared governance. Second, the identification of responsibility levels of decision makers including a system of checks and balances that require a written response when a decision made is contrary to the proposal of the recommending party.

During the spring semester, the BRC met almost weekly to develop the statement and decision making matrix. These items and the recommendations below were submitted to the President on April 30, 2018.

BRC Recommendations:

1. Use the upcoming Convocation and Fall 2018 semester to solicit input on the matrix from faculty, administration, and staff.
2. Incorporate Shared Governance in the form of a policy to be included with the College Vision, Mission, and Values documents.
3. Continue the Blue Ribbon Committee through academic year 2018-2019.
4. The Shared Governance policy should have its own area—it is currently under the instructional policies area.
5. Reimagine and clarify the purpose and role of the President's Leadership Team (PLT).

Fall 2018

All of the BRC's recommendations were accepted and Drs. Percy and Hughes presented the draft shared governance policy and matrix at convocation and answered questions. Following convocation, the policy on shared governance and matrix were sent to all employees through a Presidential Newsflash. In addition to the electronic communication, BRC members held many in-person sessions with academic and non-academic groups to solicit feedback and input to improve the policy and matrix.

Input from the college community was essential and resulted in strengthening the shared governance policy, ensuring that it was relevant to all constituencies, including students. The PLT received, reviewed, and recommended approval of the Policy in October 2018. Dr. Wills approved the Shared Governance Policy soon thereafter.

The decision-making matrix and assignment of responsibility levels to decision makers challenged the committee and required numerous meetings to debate appropriate roles and responsibilities collegially. The assistance of Dr. Emily Weinacker, Director of Human Resources, was invaluable to the BRC in developing consensus around the areas of employee compensation and employee evaluations. In the end, there were two decisions where the committee could not agree, and the BRC invited Dr. Wills to its final meeting to help resolve those issues where the committee could not reach consensus.

At their last meeting, the BRC developed a proposal for replacing the current President's Leadership Team with a College Council. This Council would provide for the broader involvement of faculty, staff, and students in the College's decision-making practice. The College Council Proposal, Shared Governance Policy, Matrix, and this summary were delivered to the President on November 15, 2018. With this submission, the Blue Ribbon Committee's work is complete. Ongoing monitoring and assessment of shared governance will reside with the PLT or the new College Council if adopted.