

My view of the meaning of shared governance for Humboldt State University Faculty

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This document is a result of conversations I held with four members of the Academic Senate (Professors Cindy Moyer, Saeed Mortazavi, Michael Goodman and David Kornreich) and Provost Bob Snyder in the Fall of 2008. I am indebted to them for their suggestions and criticisms of an earlier draft. I also thank Professor John Powell for his suggestions and criticisms some of which are included in the document below.

There is a prolific literature on what is meant by shared governance and often strong disagreements. For an excellent review of this material, I recommend an article by William D. Leach of Sacramento State in April of 2008 that was recommended to me by Professor John Powell, General Faculty President, ([http://www.csus.edu/ccp/publications/Shared Governance in Higher Education - April 2008.pdf](http://www.csus.edu/ccp/publications/Shared_Governance_in_Higher_Education_-_April_2008.pdf)). I believe that faculty, staff, administrators and students all have important roles in determining university policies and will do my best to ensure that the faculty voice and others are heard on issues affecting the academic mission of the university. The faculty role should be primarily focused on academic matters such as curriculum, student admissions, faculty hiring, and promotion and tenure decisions. Each of these issues has implications that reach well beyond the academic arena and therefore benefit from an administrative perspective as well. For example, a faculty decision to add additional courses without eliminating existing ones has significant budget implications. Below I discuss the major governance issues affecting our campus and the faculty role in decisions on these issues.

Budget

Budget decisions, of course, have implications for many aspects of campus life. The system we have developed of having the President, Provost and Vice Presidents present a budget proposal to the University Budget Committee (UBC) that includes strong faculty representation as well as the Academic Senate Finance Officer provides the opportunity for faculty to have significant influence on budgetary policy. In addition, I propose to broaden faculty input by including the Academic Senate as a whole in this process by

presenting to them the same proposal that is presented to the UBC and requesting their timely recommendations. This is an excellent mechanism to ensure shared governance for faculty on budget issues. I would also note that the Senate Chair (or designee) is a member of the executive committee and as such the Senate has multiple opportunities to influence budgetary decisions.

Before making final decisions that differ from the UBC's or Academic Senate's recommendations, I will discuss my decisions with them as I have done in the past. I will offer a rationale(s) for my decisions and will take the perspectives offered into account as I continue to do. As much as circumstances permit, I will allow time for an adequate discussion of the issues.

Faculty and their representatives, the department chairs, play the primary role in budgetary decisions at the departmental level, and this is appropriate. At the college level, department chairs play a significant role with the college dean in determining budgetary allocations.

Curriculum

Curriculum is a traditional arena for faculty governance as it should be. All major decisions regarding curriculum such as which new courses are offered, which existing courses are eliminated, which courses are part of our general educational requirements, what minors are offered, what policies guide transfer equivalence or waiver petitions and the number of majors in a program are largely the purview of the appropriate faculty groups. However, an effective and efficient curriculum structure is more likely to develop if faculty and administration work together and understand the constraints and wishes of each perspective. Difficulties develop when the needs and desires of individual faculty or units compete with the strategic needs of the university as a whole. Curriculum is an important determinant of the quality of a university and should be viewed from a university-wide perspective. The administration needs to support faculty efforts to address the concerns raised by the recent WASC accreditation group report. I quote below (in green) from my address to the faculty at the beginning of this academic year.

The team expressed concern about how effectively student performance is being measured across all departments as well as in the general education program.

Concerning curriculum, the team stated, *The oversight and approval of curriculum,*

including general education, appears to be decentralized to the point of being less than cohesive.

This is clearly an area that deserves attention from our administration and faculty governance structures. We are engaged in this process now.

The importance of HSU moving from a teaching-centered to a learning centered university that does its planning and makes its decisions based on evidence is effectively summarized in this next quote from the WASC report.

...a paradigm shift is taking hold in American higher education. In its briefest form, the paradigm that has governed our colleges is this: a college is an institution that exists to provide instruction. Subtly, but profoundly, we are shifting to a new paradigm: a college is an institution that exists to provide learning. This shift changes everything.” While HSU has shown progress in making this shift, the Visitation Team observed that the institution will need to remain vigilant and active in its efforts to create a culture of evidence – a culture that can exist only when members of the community understand the value and benefits of planning and the use of assessment data to improve the quality of their students’ educational experiences.

Accountability is an issue that is important to the taxpaying public and is taking hold in higher education. The CSU’s involvement in the Voluntary System of Accountability (see <http://www.humboldt.edu/~anstud/> College Portrait) is a beginning, but this effort needs to be addressed at the department level. Faculty governance and the administration must share in this effort for it to be successful.

One of the issues that I have spoken about many times on this campus, and in several of my convocation addresses, is that of general education. I have come to believe that general education is perhaps the most important aspect of the education that we provide to students. It is primarily, but not entirely, the humanities that provide the foundation for successful and fulfilling lives that will depend upon continual learning. Unlike the past, students today are likely to have several, often quite different, careers over the course of their lives. All of us have heard the refrain from people outside academia that they want to hire articulate students who can read critically and think creatively. I’ve even been told by employers that they don’t worry about the

knowledge that specific positions require; they believe that students will succeed at their jobs as long as they are able to learn, think and communicate.

The WASC review team believes that *HSU has had varied success in assessing General Education*. They go on to say:

Most areas have developed measurable learning outcomes; however, very few have implemented an assessment plan. This lack of movement is probably caused by some combination of a lack of clear guidelines for structures and design of assessment from the University Curriculum Committee and the absence of a single oversight authority for General Education. The Visitation Team recognizes the resource issues that are confronting HSU, but the Team also believes that there should be more attention focused on HSU General Education by a single authority within the HSU community. This probably should be a member of the administration who would manage the implementation of timely and effective assessment practices and use the results to improve student learning outcomes. At this point, the development of General Education planning and assessment appears uneven -- something which could affect quality.

This is clearly one of the important changes we need to make at our university if we wish to serve our students well. We must continue working hard to improve the curriculum that we offer to students. WASC praised Administrative Affairs for their effective use of quality improvement techniques. We could all benefit from this expertise to regularly assess what we are doing and how to improve our outcomes.

Again, this is a clear role for faculty governance with administrative help.

Student Admissions

Faculty should play an important role in determining enrollment and admissions policies in accord with the guidelines established by the Trustees and the Legislature. Our Enrollment Management Committee played a significant role in helping us to increase student enrollment over the last few years. However, the administration must play an important role in this process as well, as the financial status of the campus depends upon student enrollment. The faculty role in graduate admissions is and should be more significant since they must work much more closely with graduate students. Again, the

role of the university administration is important here too as graduate enrollments also impact the university's finances.

Faculty Hiring and Promotion and Tenure

Faculty working together with department chairs and deans should play a very significant role in the selection of their colleagues once the administration has made a decision to allocate resources to recruit new faculty members. Our ability to attract and retain minority faculty members is an important issue here and was noted by the WASC review team. There needs to be close cooperation between our Academic Personnel Services and faculty governance groups to develop a means to move beyond traditional recruiting methodologies to be able to identify minority candidates for our faculty searches and to attract minority faculty to our campus.

Promotion and tenure decisions clearly must involve faculty colleagues as well as administrative officers. We have made some important changes in our procedures and requirements for promotion and tenure, and I am grateful to the Senate for these efforts. High standards are a valuable means for improving the quality of a university and depend upon the willingness of faculty to make accurate judgments of their colleagues. I understand that there may be some reluctance by some faculty members to make such judgments and thus some of the difficult decisions are being made by administrators. This is a responsibility of administrative leadership, however support from faculty leaders to strengthen the role of faculty assessment of their colleagues is most desirable.

Conclusions

As the WASC and Keeling and Associates reports have clearly told us, our university needs to change and quickly. We all need to assume a university perspective on the change that is required and work together to do so. Major administrative decisions should be discussed with the faculty using a variety of approaches including the Senate. In my address to the campus at the beginning of the academic year, I asked the Senate to work on the following issues.

In light of the recommendations of our WASC review team, I ask the Senate this year to work with our consultants and the administration to reform our committee structure to simplify, centralize and make our decision processes more transparent. The WASC review team also noted the need for better planning, oversight and evaluation

of our general education programs. I call upon the Senate to work with the administration to achieve the reform the WASC report envisions. Finally, I ask the Senate to work with the administration to develop leadership opportunities, especially for our younger colleagues.

I do believe that a stronger faculty governance system that is respected by most of our faculty is a way to effect change at Humboldt State University. We have to move beyond the concerns and behavior of the past to a real trust in each other. We all must act from a broader perspective than we have in the past. I look forward to working with you to do so.

Below, I repeat my statement provided to the campus in my address in the Fall of 2007 of my vision for the future of our university.

What the Future Holds for HSU

Charting the direction of a university necessitates predicting future societal needs and trends. This is imperative if HSU is to remain competitive and continue to be among the leaders in higher education. I would like to share with you my thoughts about what the university will be like in the future – ten or fifteen years from now.

Our public funding will continue to decline as the public's perception of education as an important social investment continues to evolve into a sense that education is a private good and should be funded by those who receive it. Over the next two decades, it is predicted that there will be a shortage of person power especially among younger educated people. While there will continue to be substantial increases in tuition, the decline in the numbers of educated younger workers will encourage employers to help pay for their employees education thus providing an additional source of income for universities. Thus we will need to be attuned to the current and predicted future needs of industry.

The growth of for-profit universities means that higher education will become more responsive to the market as competition both within the US and from abroad becomes more intense. Increasing competition and a world full of uncertainty means that HSU will have worked to diversify its income sources. HSU faculty

and staff will actively seek resources that support both education and the applied research that benefits our region.

HSU by necessity will be much more effective in retaining our students in the future. This will involve efforts by the entire campus community. A more diverse faculty and staff will continue to make the university increasingly attractive to students of color. I envision increased growth of our Native American programs as a result of the university's growing involvement with several local tribes. HSU will be the higher education choice for Indians throughout Northern California.

HSU will be more energy efficient as a result of the Humboldt Energy Independence Fund and the creative ideas that flow from student/faculty/staff collaboration. Expenditures for utilities will decrease substantially. Our green reputation will continue to attract students as HSU becomes one of the few truly energy-independent campuses. In the middle of the next decade, the university will be required to implement a more demanding admissions process as the number of potential students wishing admission continues to rise.

Despite the fact that information technology has deprived universities of the near monopoly on access to information that they once had, HSU faculty will make extensive use of these new technologies to make education for students more efficient and effective. HSU has developed a series of new, interdisciplinary majors for knowledge workers that are attractive to a broad range of students. HSU has also used information technology to develop learning opportunities tailored to individual people whose careers are constantly changing and whose employers demand regular updates.

The growth in HSU's student numbers will allow the creation of a number of new majors emphasizing experiential education; these majors will be highly attractive to students and readily serve the needs of our region and the state. Humboldt State University will move toward the middle of the 21st century as a leader in its region and be recognized throughout the state for its innovative programs, partnerships with industry and responsiveness to the rapidly changing higher education environment.

Finally, I've copied below the Vision and Mission statements for our university that were developed as part of the strategic planning process four years ago. This process was highly inclusive of both campus and community constituencies. I still find these statements inspiring and representative of the essence of Humboldt State University.

THE VISION of Humboldt State University

Humboldt State University will be the campus of choice for individuals who seek above all else to improve the human condition and our environment. We will be the premier center for the interdisciplinary study of the environment and its natural resources.

We will be a regional center for the arts. We will be renowned for social and environmental responsibility and action. We believe the key to our common future will be the individual citizen who acts in good conscience and engages in informed action. We will commit to increasing our diversity of people and perspectives. We will be exemplary partners with our communities, including tribal nations. We will be stewards of learning to make a positive difference.

THE MISSION of Humboldt State University

Humboldt State University is a comprehensive, residential campus of the California State University. We welcome students from California and the world to our campus. We offer them access to affordable, high-quality education that is responsive to the needs of a fast-changing world. We serve them by providing a wide array of programs and activities that promote understanding of social, economic and environmental issues. We help individuals prepare to be responsible members of diverse societies.

These programs and the experience of a Humboldt State education serve as a

catalyst for life-long learning and personal development. We strive to create an inclusive environment of free inquiry, in which learning is the highest priority. In this environment, discovery through research, creative endeavors and experience, energizes the educational process.