

## **Shared Governance Proposal**

### **Introduction**

The concept of shared governance has a rich tradition in academic life, though in recent years it has begun virtually to disappear from many of our campuses. Largely in response to the “accountability” movements of the 1980s, many universities adopted a more corporate model of governance, which creates clear and often uncomfortable boundaries between faculty and administration. While there have been some positive results from this trend, a generation of this form of governance has created several problems in higher education. The most obvious problem is the development of two cultures—faculty and administration—who increasingly do not understand or even trust each other. Faculty, for instance, often complain of a lack of transparency in administrative matters, or of feeling “out of the loop” when decisions are made; meanwhile, administrators often complain that faculty fail to see the university as a whole, because they look only through the narrow lens of their own department or specialization. Ironically, this model has not made institutions appear more “accountable” to their governing bodies; legislators and boards of trustees continue to complain of the university’s tendencies to be inefficient and to be out of touch with public expectations.

In a recent article entitled “Why We Need Leadership in Place,” John F. Wergin of Antioch University pointed out some of the results of some of these trends. He noted that the current model fails to develop faculty as leaders on their campuses and contributes to the institutionalization of two cultures. Wergin argues for a governance model “that encourages academic professionals to participate more effectively in reforming and rebuilding the changing social covenant of the academy, one that would bridge the gulf between faculty and administration that has become so toxic under the managerial culture.” Wergin further shows that shared governance is consistent with several recent trends in leadership, including transformative, servant, and participatory models. A model of shared governance encourages faculty and administration to develop a common vision of the university and to speak with a common voice about its needs.

Many of these problems exist here at CSU. While it seems clear that both our faculty and our administration are hard-working and dedicated to this university’s mission, there has been growing misunderstanding and miscommunication in recent years between the two cultures. In addition, a Senate subcommittee looking at our bylaws has found that we have not been implementing them consistently, and yet nobody has seemed to notice. We risk becoming more fragmented, understanding each other less, and confusing our public about our shared sense of mission. For these reasons we need shared governance at CSU.

Our recommendation to move to shared governance comes after a year of fact-finding and debate among the faculty. In September, 2006, Hugh Hudson of Georgia State University spoke at a faculty forum about his university’s shared governance plan, which more than ten years ago created a university Senate and involved faculty on the front lines of establishing the university budget. The result has been an effective approach to salary compression, one of the central problems we face on our campus, as

well as a greater climate of trust between faculty and administration. Officers of our AAUP chapter met last fall with leaders at Georgia College and State University, where a shared governance structure has been in place for five years. They report a boost in faculty morale, and a conversation with GC&SU's president, Dorothy Leland, confirms that she shares confidence in the shared governance model. All parties report that shared governance requires hard work and challenges faculty to take on responsibilities that they might have previously avoided. However, when faculty do participate in governance, they develop a greater understanding of the complex issues involved in decision-making.

It is, therefore, in this spirit that we propose a model of shared governance. Specifically, we believe that CSU will reap the following benefits of the proposed model:

- A more democratic governance structure, giving faculty a real role and responsibility in decision-making and increasing transparency across the campus;
- A faculty voice and faculty responsibility in budget decisions;
- Assurance of a consistent faculty role in searches for and evaluations of administrative positions;
- Greater assurance that we will implement our bylaws more consistently;
- Greater consistency of vision and mission across the campus, one which transcends discipline and departmentalization.