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In making decisions, the president of a metropolitan university must respond to many external and internal constituencies. One challenge of leadership at an institution which places high value on shared governance is to collaborate with the faculty in the decision-making process. Although collective decisions take more time and may be perceived by outsiders as weakness, in the experience of Weber State University, communication and faculty involvement in decisions results in better and more thorough policies that benefit from greater campus-wide understanding and support.

Shared Leadership

In today's changing world the position of university president has become increasingly precarious. A cursory scanning of the media shows that many presidents run into trouble because they have not developed a leadership style that meets the expectations of their multiple constituencies. The most commonly cited reasons for the dismissal of a president are:

- Perceived lack of leadership
- Lack of support from Board of Trustees
- Failure to involve faculty in the decision-making process.

Successfully negotiating governance and decision making is especially problematic in metropolitan universities, with their commitment to multiple internal and external constituencies. As Brownell points out, people have very high expectations for metropolitan universities:

"The opportunity and burden of the metropolitan university--if it is to be a metropolitan university – is to serve the entire urban region and all its diverse populations, interests, and elements...No institution can meet every need for local development, but the metropolitan university must be involved in every significant political, economic and social dimension of its complex, extensive community" ("Metropolitan Universities: Past, Present and Future." Blaine A. Brownell. *Metropolitan Universities*, 4:3 pp. 18-20.)

With these expectations, it is easy to become so involved in the community that the president's relationships on campus are undermined. The challenge of leadership is to balance both internal and external demands in an environment of shared leadership. This article explores this dilemma, focusing on the interaction between president and faculty, one critical aspect of shared governance. In particular, we explore how this relationship has evolved at Weber State University. The University was founded in 1889 as Weber Academy by the LDS (Mormon) Church, but became a part of the state system in 1933. Today Weber State serves 14,500 students and offers associate, bachelor and a limited number of graduate degrees. The institution has nearly fifty departments and programs, organized

in seven colleges, and employs about 525 faculty. WSU focuses on undergraduate education, on maintaining the balance between academic and professional programs, and in meeting the cultural and work preparation needs of the community. It is located in Ogden, Utah, and serves a metropolitan population of 273,000.

We begin with the personal point of view of our current president, Paul Thompson.

Shared Presidential Leadership: The President's Perspective

One of the challenges facing a president who is busy building partnerships between the university and several community groups is to collaborate with the faculty and staff in making decisions. A president who gets too involved in the community runs the risk of losing support, visibility, and the perception of leadership on campus. Maintaining support both on campus and in the community is important but not easy to do. When I was interviewed for the President's job at Weber State I was asked, "Would you be an inside president focusing on the activities on campus, or an outside president focusing on the activities in the community." I responded that a president cannot afford to be either an "inside" or an "outside" president. To be effective a president needs to be very involved on campus working closely with the faculty and staff, but that alone is not enough. The president also must be very involved in the community working as a fund raiser and with community leaders, regents, legislators, etc. I have found that was easier said than done.

Shortly after I arrived at Weber State to accept the job as president several people talked to me about shared governance at the university, some were very positive about the tradition of shared governance at Weber. They indicated that the faculty were very involved in decision processes that led to effective management of the university. I was told that those presidents who had supported the idea of shared governance were able to be effective leaders and that one president who resisted faculty participation in decisions had a very difficult time in his efforts to lead the university. A few people were somewhat critical of shared governance because it slowed down the efforts to make changes at the university, placed constraints on the president and stood in the way of his efforts to provide strong leadership for the university.

Four years of experience at Weber State have made me a very strong supporter of shared governance. I have concluded that the tradition and policies that have developed here have contributed to an effective working relationship between the faculty and administration and that they have helped the university to make some significant changes in recent years. An analysis of governance at our institution suggests that there are three critical elements that need to be present for the process to be effective. They are:

- communication
- faculty involvement in decisions and
- trust

Communication

One incident sticks out in emphasizing the importance of keeping the faculty and staff informed about significant developments on the campus. One morning a few weeks after I came to the university, Tom Burton, the Chair of the Faculty Senate, called my office and asked if he and another faculty member could come to see me. They mentioned they had read in the previous night's newspaper that the

university was opening a branch office for our continuing education activities in a nearby community. They said they hadn't heard about plans to open such an office before, and they wanted to know what we planned to do in that office and if this was the first step of an expansion into the community.

We had a good discussion and they seemed reassured by what I told them. However, they emphasized that the faculty want to be kept informed about significant developments at the university. They indicated that a previous president had not kept the faculty informed and that led to a very strained working relationship between the president and the faculty.

That discussion was brief but had a major impact. It prompted me to be much more proactive in keeping the faculty informed. Whenever we consider a new initiative I ask the vice presidents "Is this something I should discuss with the chair of the faculty senate?" The answer is usually yes. I call Tom Burton quite often to discuss new developments and together we decide if this issue should be discussed with the faculty senate.

In an effort to build trust and maintain a meaningful discourse with faculty and staff, and in response to Tom's visit, I decided to schedule regular meetings to listen to their ideas, interests and concerns. During my first three months at the university I met with every college and division on campus. We set up one hour meetings with groups ranging in size from 15 to 57 people. At those meetings I listened to people's ideas about the university. I asked them to respond to three questions:

• What are we doing that helps us to provide quality education?
• What hinders us in our efforts to provide quality education?
• What do we need to do to improve?

The three questions were helpful in generating a very productive discussion. I learned a great deal about the university and also learned about people's concerns. Meanwhile, it helped me to convey the fact that I listen to people.

I met with over 80 percent of the faculty and staff in that three month period. Based upon their concerns and suggestions, I identified the things that we needed to do to improve the university. At the end of the interviews I wrote a memo to the faculty and staff summarizing what people said in those meetings and informing them of the improvements we intended to make.

That experience was so positive, I concluded that I needed to have meetings at least once a year in order to maintain visibility on campus and a high level of awareness of faculty and staff concerns. However, in the second year I got so busy in community activities, development activities and working with legislators that I didn't take time to hold meetings with the faculty and staff. In the fall of my third year on campus I began to get feedback that I was too involved in the community and not visible enough on campus. A faculty member told one of the regents that "I don't see the president very often. He is always out in the community."

That feedback raised a red flag and I decided it was time to get back to regular meetings on campus. In the third year I set up "town meetings" with every college and division at WSU. I briefly discussed two or three key issues we were addressing and then conducted an open discussion. Once again the "town meetings" gave me a feeling for the concerns and interests of the faculty and staff, and helped me to guide the university in the direction that the campus community feels it should go. I have found that to maintain our tradition of shared governance, it is important to receive this constituent input on a regular basis. Now I am very careful to follow up with such meetings at least once a year.

Faculty Involvement in Decisions

The faculty at Weber State expect to get involved in most of the major decisions at the institution. In many areas the faculty are not satisfied to just be informed about an issue that is being addressed; they want to play a significant role in making the decisions. Usually the question about how much to involve the faculty in a decision is fairly clear. Our policies call for faculty to formulate policy in areas such as curriculum, admission standards, and promotion and tenure, etc. On the other hand, faculty don't expect to formulate the fundraising plan for the next five years or to have a major role in drawing up plans for refurbishing the dorms. When a new issue emerges I usually call Tom Burton to discuss it with him. I describe the issue and we talk about the level of involvement that is appropriate for this issue. The different levels include:

- Informing the senate chair
- Informing the senate executive committee
- Informing the senate
- Assigning the issue to a senate standing committee to be addressed or create an ad hoc committee to address it. Usually when a committee addresses the issue it is brought to the faculty senate for discussion and a vote is taken.

These levels are sequential and we could stop at any one of the first three levels. Only a small portion of the issues that I discuss with Tom are eventually assigned to a committee to be handled.

Some of the administrators on our campus are frustrated that the decision process on major issues involves so many people and therefore takes so much time. Local community leaders interested in developing a partnership with the university get impatient when I tell them that we will need to discuss this idea with the faculty. I can understand the frustration and impatience, but I point out that if we plan to implement an idea at the university it will need broad support on the campus. Usually it is possible to get broad support only if the faculty or their representatives participate in the decision.

My experience is that significant changes will not take place without broad participation. For example, in 1989-90 the university initiated a comprehensive review of the general education program. Over a two-year period major changes were made in the program including setting a fixed termination date for all general education courses and approving a completely new list of general education courses. That major change was possible only because the faculty drove the process with active support from the administration.

One concern people have when we talk about faculty participation in decisions is that the faculty will vote down a good idea. They suggest that the administration should just announce a change without giving faculty an opportunity kill the idea. My response is, "If this is a good idea, we will be able to work together with the faculty to formulate the idea so that the faculty will vote to approve it." If the faculty do not have the opportunity to discuss and approve an idea they will not implement it anyway.

Trust

Careful thought needs to be given to the issue of trust between the administration and faculty. On most campuses the faculty are inclined to question the efforts of the administration, and often there is a low level of trust. Unfortunately, an administration can spend years trying to build trust in the organization and have that trust

undermined in a few days as a result of one decision or event.

Shared governance is very difficult in a climate of mistrust. Leaders need to ask questions about how a decision will be received by the university community. Will it build or undermine trust between faculty and administration? Have we devoted enough time to communicating on this issue so that people understand what is being done and why?

As my experiences indicate, faculty are actively involved in governance at Weber State, but this was not always the case. Before the 1960s their role was very different. The current cooperative relationship described below is the result of important events spanning the past 30 years.

The History and Role of Faculty Leadership:

The Campus Perspective

We now leave President Thompson's personal experiences to move to a more general campus view of these issues. In 1966, shortly after Weber State had developed into a four-year college, faculty and administrators discussed needed changes in the administrative structure of the institution. As a result of those discussions a faculty constitution was designed which created an Academic Council giving greater voice to the faculty in the ongoing affairs of the campus. The council numbered 39 faculty members elected apportionately, 4 students, and 13 administrators appointed by the president. The chair of the council was the president of the college. Administrators on the council had voice, but not vote. In 1973, primarily because of an extended confrontation between the faculty and the president, the leadership of the council passed to a faculty member, and in 1974 the name of the Academic Council was changed to Faculty Senate.

This faculty constitution and the academic body it created has become the anchor of the tradition of shared governance at Weber State. The constitution defined in written form the ground rules for faculty/administration relationships and identified the roles of faculty in the shared leadership of the campus.

In the mid 1970s the faculty constitution and its designated powers of governance were severely challenged by a new president who gave little heed to precedent or process. He attempted from the beginning to manipulate programs, especially the general education curricula of the college; he arbitrarily "rotated" deans in all the academic schools; he created a new vice president's position for a former associate who supported his agenda; and he operated outside designated channels in the decision-making process, choosing to function with a sort of "kitchen" cabinet rather than in-line faculty and administrative groups.

The institution was forced into a prolonged and wrenching confrontation between faculty and president, and ultimately governing boards were drawn into the encounter. In time the beleaguered president faded away, as often happens with presidents in trouble; nevertheless, the experience of the 1970s, difficult as it was, produced some positive outcomes:

- It provided a reality check for principles of shared governance that to that time had appeared only on paper.
- It more sharply defined faculty and administrative roles, clarifying expectations and limitations.
- It confirmed the strength of process and precedent.
- It forged a faculty jealous of its constitutional prerogatives.
- It alerted future presidents to an attentive and functioning system of shared leadership.

• It established a valued tradition of governance that has carried forward into recent years as Weber State became a University.

The Faculty Senate operates primarily through its standing committees. The Executive Committee serves as the steering and agenda setting body of the Senate and assumes the role of faculty leadership in legislative and constitutional affairs. Some other committees of the Senate include:

• Academic Resources and Computing
• Admissions, Standards, and Student Affairs
• Appointment, Promotion, Academic Freedom and Tenure
• Curriculum and General Education
• Research, Scholarship, and Professional Growth
• Salary, Benefits, and Budget

These committees have memberships of both faculty and administrators on a ratio which does not exceed three to one. In addition to their ongoing assignments, the committees often receive charges from the Executive Committee relating to special tasks which address the affairs of the campus. For instance, the Curriculum and General Education Committee has recently been asked to assess the effectiveness of our general education program on the basis of established criteria approved earlier by the Senate. The Academic Resources and Computing Committee is developing a campus master plan for academic computing which will prioritize and direct the use of available computing resources in the decade ahead.

Recommendations from the standing committees are presented to the Faculty Senate for approval. If approved, they are then sent to the president for implementation or response. If the president has a question about a Faculty Senate action, he has 21 days to return it with a statement of his concerns to the Senate for its reconsideration. If differences on an issue cannot be ironed out or a compromise reached, then the Senate may ask that the issue be submitted for decision to the Board of Trustees.

With the exception of the 1970s furor over institutional leadership, there has never been in 27 years of shared governance an academic issue submitted to the Board of Trustees for arbitration because of a senate/president impasse. Occasionally an item has been returned by the president for senate reconsideration, but usually the concern centers around a fiscal price tag, strategic priorities, or community relations. Cooperation and joint purpose in these issues have always led to a settlement in the best interest of the institution and the clientele it serves.

If a system of shared governance is to function effectively, support must be given to the infrastructure upon which it is based. The Faculty Senate at Weber State University receives an office budget each year which funds office space, a full-time secretary, supplies and duplicating costs, some out-of-state travel, and approximately two full-time equivalents of reassigned time which is distributed among the senate chair, chairs of standing committees, and members of the Executive Committee.

This fiscal support insures the viability of faculty involvement in the governance process. It has evolved and accrued over 20 years of senate existence and reflects not only a gradual increase of budgetary support but also a build up of mutual trust and respect in the ongoing cooperative experience between faculty and administration at Weber State University.

The Role of Communication

Communication between faculty and administration is a key component of this trust and cooperation. In an academic environment shared governance entails inviting communication, facilitating the orderly input of ideas, and giving reasonable consideration to the suggestions received. To maintain its integrity, this process must result in decisions that are responsive to constituent input. Failing adoption, leaders must effectively explain why recommendations were not implemented so that faculty do not feel that their input has been solicited and then ignored.

Both anecdotal evidence and more formal survey results support our historical experience that communication between faculty and administration is highly valued at Weber State University. For example, in nearly one hundred interviews with faculty about their perceptions of the university, communication emerged spontaneously as the single most important concept.

In 1993, as a part of the ongoing strategic planning initiative, the campus responded to the Institutional Goals Inventory (IGI) designed by the Educational Testing Service. Faculty indicated that the following goals should be of "high value" or "extremely high value" to the university:

- To assure that everyone may participate/be represented in making decisions affecting them: 88 percent
- To provide opportunities for faculty and students to provide information for decision making data base: 60 percent
- To create a system of campus governance genuinely responsive to concerns of all on campus: 75 percent.

A higher percentage of our faculty valued these goals than did their peers nationally. This strong rating indicates the high standard by which the campus measures communication performance, and may explain why interviews indicated that some faculty are not fully satisfied. Most respondents began by commenting positively on the President's reputation as a good listener who is genuinely interested in people:

- "The President is warm and friendly. He wants people to feel good. He is open, a good listener who solicits input."
- "You can always count on the President to listen to you. I feel like I can have access to him whenever I need it."

However, these positive comments were sometimes followed with negative judgements by those who felt that not enough communication, or not the right kind of communication was occurring:

- Not enough communication is occurring.
- "Faculty never feel that they are fully informed."
- "The President needs to define an appropriate avenue to encourage input from those who are not on the Faculty Senate or in other leadership positions."
- The wrong people/groups have access to the president.
- "Only certain pet groups can have direct access to the President."
- "Anyone in the community with a harebrained idea seems to get to the President."

As these faculty comments highlight, even an administration which understands and privileges the role of communication may still not meet everyone's expectations.

Two Case Studies

To illustrate the critical role of communication in shared governance, we will contrast how two major decisions were made on our campus. In the first situation the administration made a significant commitment without full faculty input or consultation on the decision. As a result, faculty felt that they had been left out of the decision-making process and that "shared" governance had not been shared at all. In the second decision, full communication between the administration, staff and faculty, resulted in a successful and widely supported revision of the college's heath benefits plan, despite initial skepticism and opposition to the proposed changes.

Conference Center

In the summer of 1991, community leaders and about 15 key faculty and staff strongly encouraged the University to get involved in the development of a downtown conference center. This project involved restoring an art deco theater and creating a full conference center to promote downtown economic development. During the 1991-92 academic year the project was discussed once by the University Strategic Planning Committee. University representatives were then involved in a feasibility study funded by the county. This study was completed in August 1992 and showed that the project was feasible and was a good investment for the community. However, it also projected that it would require an operating subsidy in the first five years. By that time there was a strong community expectation that WSU would operate, maintain, and subsidize the facility if needed. The president first consulted the Faculty Senate chair in September, when professors returned to campus. He briefed the full Senate in their October meeting. External events had progressed so quickly, however, that by fall the university had expressed support for the project and agreed to participate at some level. As the President said, "The train had already left the station" by the time faculty was fully informed. Since commitment to participate had apparently been made, no committee or task force was created to study the project. Town meetings were held, but these were mainly to inform rather than to seek input for the decision making process.

As a result, faculty expressed the following concerns about the decision to support the conference center:
- "What part does the faculty play in the decision-making process?"
- "It seems to me that in our strong desire to 'cooperate' with the business and political community that we sometimes allow ourselves to 'agree to talk' and to put certain items on our agenda and then, before we can get any really serious discussion of the issue, we are trapped into supporting endeavors that have gone beyond our control or complete understanding. In this case, I do not believe that the campus was fully informed of the implications of the decision before it became clear that WSU was going to underwrite a significant portion of the costs of the project."
- "Precisely because the idea of a conference center has great merit, it deserves input from the entire campus and especially from the faculty who take the term 'faculty governance' very seriously."

Although the Conference Center is moving forward and Weber continues to play a key role, this episode left a legacy of frustration and concern that still "rankles" many faculty.

Medical Benefits

In this second episode, both the process and the outcome contrast sharply

with those of the Conference Center. In 1990 the university's Human Resource Division began to study increases in health benefit costs. Their study confirmed that by the year 2000, costs would consume a majority of compensation increases. To prevent a total erosion of future salaries, an Accounting Department faculty member, with extensive experience as a hospital administrator, and a health industry actuary were asked to study the problem in more depth and design a new health benefits plan.

In late Fall 1993, they presented recommendations for sweeping change to the President's Council. The Council appointed an ad hoc committee composed of the compensation subcommittees of the Faculty Senate, the Classified Staff Association, and the Professional Staff Association, to review the plan.

The committee met with each of the employee organizations, and with other groups as requested, to explain the plan and to publicize the recommendations to the campus. They also held public hearings, attended by about 25 percent of all employees, to answer questions and solicit input. Employees were also invited to submit written comments. After collecting and considering this feedback, the ad hoc committee revised the plan.

This revised plan, which included the recommendation for a one-time salary increase to offset increased out-of-pocket expenses, was forwarded to the Faculty Senate, the Professional Staff Association and the Classified Staff Association. After extensive discussion, all three groups voted unanimously to accept the plan, and they urged immediate implementation. This recommendation was then approved by the President's Council. Despite some very strong negative feelings about the original recommendation, the amended plan had wide support and was seen as a campus decision, not an imposition of the administration.

Although the two episodes are not completely parallel because of the strong community involvement in the Conference Center, they highlight some of the processes involved in shared governance and show what can happen when important

TABLE I
Comparison of Two Decision-Making Processes

Conference Center	Medical Benefits
No ad hoc review committee	Ad hoc review committee of faculty and staff
President discussed with Faculty Senate and staff associations and Strategic Planning Task Force	President discussed with Faculty Senate and staff associations
No open hearings	Open hearings
No committee reviews	Committee review of report
No votes by Faculty Senate and staff associations	Votes by Faculty Senate and staff associations
President perceived as leading this effort	Faculty and staff perceived as leading this effort
Outcome: Frustration and lack of support	Outcome: Campus-wide consensus

steps are eliminated. As Table 1 summarizes, the process of shared decision-making can lead to better, more informed decisions that enjoy greater campus-wide understanding and support. Shared responsibility for decisions builds confidence and trust between the president and faculty, and this unity strengthens the university at all levels.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Shared Governance

Our experience leads us to see a number of advantages and disadvantages inherent in university shared governance. Some disadvantages of the process are:
- President is not in immediate control of decision making.
- Takes a longer time to make decisions; change is slow
- Consultation and action are difficult during summer months when most faculty are away.
- Outside stake holders become impatient with the process.
- Shared decision-making may be interpreted by some as a weakness.

Some advantages of the process are:
- Additional creative thinking are introduced into the procedure.
- Decisions are likely to be better informed.
- More credence and stability are introduced into the process.
- Greater buy-in for decisions made.
- Greater probability that decisions will be supported and implemented.
- President enjoys more confidence and trust.
- Implied social contract based on reciprocal obligations of trust.

Through the years, Weber State has discovered that the advantages of shared governance far outweigh the disadvantages. Shared governance demands time, effort, and commitment; but the positive outcomes are significant. It taps the synergy of the campus; it relies on cooperative action; it creates expectancy, trust, and optimism in ongoing affairs. It implies that unity of purpose is a valued commodity in the decision-making process and that shared vision plays a trusted part in the governance of the institution. Building the greatness of a university through shared governance seems to reinforce a statement by Hanah Arendt: "For excellence, the presence of others is always required."