



March 2005

Union **NEWS**

Monthly Newsletter of The Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers

March Meeting to Focus on College Governance

Decision-Making
Reappointment and Promotion
Creation of Faculty Lines
Allocation of Resources
Faculty-Administration Ratios



When and how are faculty involved in decision-making at the College?

This is the theme of the March general membership meeting. The American Federation of Teachers calls it shared governance and the California State Legislature wrote it into law in the 1980s. The American Association of University Professors includes shared governance as one of the four major issues in higher education along with academic freedom, contingent positions and salary equity. Other community colleges are experimenting with institutionalizing shared governance to ensure faculty participation in the decision-making process. Where do we stand on this vital question?

As a function of structure and how people relate to each other within that

structure, governance can be hierarchical, adversarial or collegial. It's all a matter of choice and deliberate design. The Union would like to begin an open and honest discussion of how to shape collegial governance that recognizes the contributions of all constituent groups and fosters a sense of equal partnership in institutional policies and directions.

Educational governance in community colleges in the United States is largely a state-by-state decision. Instituting shared governance can be voluntary or mandated. How does the faculty want to help shape Westchester Community College and what strategies should we adopt to get where we want to go?

Join Us
Wednesday
March 2
Science 102
Lunch
12 p.m.-1 p.m.

AFT Statement on Shared Governance

Shared governance is the set of practices under which college faculty and staff participate in significant decisions about the operation of their institutions. Colleges and universities are special types of institutions with a unique mission—the creation and dissemination of ideas.

For that reason, they have created particular arrangements to best serve that mission. For example, academic tenure protects the status, academic freedom and independent voice of scholars and teachers. Shared governance, in turn, arose out of a recognition that:

- academic decision-making should be largely independent of short-term managerial and political considerations;
- faculty and professional staff are in the best position to shape and implement curriculum and research policy, to select academic colleagues and judge their work; and
- the perspective of all frontline personnel is invaluable in making sound decisions about allocating resources, setting goals, choosing top officers and guiding student life.

Broad participation in decision-making clearly increases the level of employee investment in the institution's success. As a result, organizational theorists for many years have recommended shared decision-making as central to improving productivity in all kinds of organizations. In higher education, there is a high turnover rate among top administrators; this means that faculty and staff are often more knowledgeable about the institutional history that is so valuable to institutional planning. Without that institutional history, institutions are apt to repeat past failures.

The AFT thus believes that shared governance should be structured to incorporate the views of faculty and staff at all levels of decision-making. The institution's administrators must provide participants with the time, encouragement and information necessary to be effective.

Shared governance is vital to the academic integrity of our colleges and universities, to prevent the pressures of commercialization from distorting the institution's educational mission or eroding standards and quality, and to uphold the ideals of academic freedom and democratic practice. Strengthening shared governance is the responsibility of all colleges and universities—and a priority of our union.

Excerpts from the AAUP Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities

The variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students, and others. The relationship calls for adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort...

Long-range plans:

The framing and execution of long-range plans, one of the most important aspects of institutional responsibility, should be a central and continuing concern in the academic community. Effective planning demands that the broadest possible exchange of information and opinion should be the rule for communication among the components of a college or university. The channels of communication should be established and maintained by joint endeavor...

Buildings and grounds:

A second area calling for joint effort in internal operation is that of decisions regarding existing or prospective physical resources. The board, president, and faculty should all seek agreement on basic decisions regarding buildings and other facilities to be used in the educational work of the institution...

Budgeting:

The allocation of resources among competing demands is central in the formal responsibility of the governing board, in the administrative authority of the president, and in the educational function of the faculty. Each component should therefore have a voice in the determination of short- and long-range priorities, and each should receive appropriate analyses of past budgetary experience, reports on current budgets and expenditures, and short- and long-range budgetary projections...

Selection of a new president:

Joint effort of a most critical kind must be taken when an institution chooses a new president. The selection of a chief administrative officer should follow upon a cooperative search by the governing board and the faculty, taking into consideration the opinions of others who are appropriately interested...

And one successful model: the Shared Governance Bylaws of Norwalk Community College (excerpt):

Article I - Name

The name of this organization shall be the "The Shared Governance Committee of Norwalk Community College."

Article II - Purpose

The Shared Governance Committee will serve as a means by which the college staff may have formal input in the decision-making process for policy at Norwalk Community College to achieve and maintain a high standard of academic excellence. Further, the committee will ensure that policy issues brought before it are routed to the proper organizational entity for consideration, review and/or implementation, as needed. Results derived from this action must then be communicated back to the Shared Governance Committee.

The Shared Governance Committee will review issues concerning will policies (academic, budgetary, committee structures, etc) and services of the college and will advise the Management Council and the College Staff regarding such matters. The Shared Governance Committee shall consider any and all recommendations or grievances brought before it. It will give every consideration to arrive at properly fair and equitable decisions. The Shared Governance Committee will be prepared to give an accounting of its deliberations. Minutes will be published and distributed after approval by the chair.

The Shared Governance Committee will serve as a means to keep the College Staff informed of activities regarding college operation and special events.

Article III - Authority

The Shared Governance Committee has the authority to act independently to propose resolutions to the College Staff and/or the Management Council, as would be appropriate, for consideration and approval.

Article IV - Membership

The Shared Governance Committee will consist of thirteen voting members. Twelve (12) voting members will be elected by the entire College Staff and will consist of: Six Faculty members, three ACL, two Classified Staff and one Management Representative. One Student Representative, designated by the Student Senate, will also be a voting member. With the exception of the student representative, committee members will be elected for a two (2) year term and can serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms. The student representative will be selected by the Student Senate for a one (1) year term and can also serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms...