



Shared Governance Document

Working Draft

April 14, 2021

Stephen F. Austin State University

Shared Governance Document¹

April 14, 2021

Introductory Statement

This document has been jointly developed by faculty, staff and administration at Stephen F. Austin State University and serves as a statement of mutually agreed upon principles regarding university shared governance. All parties are committed to a common vision for the [mission of the institution](#). Further, we recognize that the success of the institution and the morale of the faculty, staff, students, and administration are dependent upon the legitimate involvement and collaboration of these constituencies in the planning and decision-making processes within the University.

Overview

One of the things that makes universities unique is their system of shared governance. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) defines shared governance as meaningful participation in institutional governance, emphasizing the importance of faculty involvement in making personnel decisions, selecting administrators, preparing the budget, and helping set university-wide policy. The AAUP principles of shared governance were written in collaboration with the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. It is available in the AAUP Policy Documents and Reports, also known as the [Redbook](#).

At Stephen F. Austin State University, we could not agree more. This document serves as a commitment and guide to a joint faculty/staff/administration relationship that manages our complex interests and common objectives. We believe shared governance between the faculty, staff and the administration is the best way to advance our mission and status as a prominent independent regional comprehensive university. We wish to utilize this document to outline the collaborative decision-making and shared governance we all agree upon.

We want to be clear on this point: Our faculty and staff play a critical role in the management of Stephen F. Austin State University. This collaborative decision-making is seen frequently in the Faculty Senate, which serves as the legislative and executive agency of the Faculty, but it goes much further. Our system of joint leadership and shared governance also includes a wide-ranging matrix of advisory and decision-making bodies that include college councils, chairperson councils, dean councils, executive committees, search committees, promotion and tenure committees and more. In addition, shared governance extends to include staff and students through staff councils and student government organizations.

Definition

Shared governance is the process by which the University community (i.e., faculty, staff, administrators, and students) have the opportunity to influence decisions on matters of policy and procedure, and/or an opportunity to present alternatives on such matters. The objective of shared governance is to foster mutually reinforcing relationships that expand the opportunities for cooperation and leadership while facilitating judicious, yet creative, university governance. Shared governance includes issues of values, culture, management, and administration, as well as operating frameworks, such as legislation, which are externally imposed. The intent of this process is to balance efficiency and effectiveness with equity and fairness.

Shared governance includes mutual participation in the development of policy and decisions in the areas of strategic and budget planning, faculty and staff welfare, selection and retention of academic and administrative officers, campus planning and development, and organizational accountability.

It should be noted that shared governance is not the replacement or elimination of positional leadership and leadership decision-making, a strategy to support downsizing of leadership, self-governance or abdication of leadership or decision-making responsibilities.

In an environment of shared governance, those who will be affected by a decision on policy or procedures should be informed and have the opportunity to influence governance decisions. A climate of shared governance relies upon consistent and trustworthy communication that is multidirectional and reciprocal. All participants in the shared governance process are accountable for the proper execution of their roles in a timely manner. Shared governance should permeate all levels of decision-making within the university community. Full and active participation at all levels of shared governance should be encouraged without fear of retribution. Shared governance reflects the need for separation of powers within the University's decentralized structure for better functional policy-making. Recommendations made through shared governance processes should be taken seriously and have actual influence in university decision making.

Guidelines

This document outlines shared governance guidelines and are intended to elaborate details in the way that faculty, staff, students, and administration address certain issues. These guidelines express a mutual desire to work together harmoniously and shall be interpreted to be consistent with all applicable laws, regulations, policies and bylaws of the Stephen F. Austin State University Board of Regents. These guidelines represent a commitment of the parties, not a legal contract. This document does not supplant the [SFA Policy Manual](#).

Representation

While many shared governance issues will involve multiple constituencies, the process acknowledges that certain areas may be the primary concern of one group either because the matters considered have primary importance and concern to that group or because one group holds the expertise in those matters. Representation should be proportional to the level of impact on constituencies. However, efficiency and effectiveness should not be sacrificed for the sake of proportionality. Representation should reflect the diverse nature of the university community.

The Faculty Role in Shared Governance

The faculty are the intellectual core of Stephen F. Austin State University. The faculty deliver instruction, carry out research, perform service for its profession and the community, and participate in the management of the University through shared governance. In the areas of intellectual development and instruction, the interest of the faculty is primary. The faculty will exercise its role in shared governance through and by service in the Faculty Senate, in the academic colleges and departments, and on university strategic and task-force committees. The faculty's involvement in shared governance includes, but is not limited to, the areas of curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, university budgeting, research, faculty status, faculty employment and welfare, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. Faculty roles and responsibilities are outlined in the [SFA Policy Manual](#).

The Staff Role in Shared Governance

The purpose and role of the staff are to provide effective support structures for Stephen F. Austin State University. The staff provide educational support services, and complement educational programs. The role of the staff is to represent its areas of responsibility in shared governance. The staff will exercise its role in shared governance through and by service on the Staff Council and on university committees. The staff's involvement in shared governance includes, but is not limited to, the areas of student affairs, financial services, academic support, research, advancement, physical resources, and staff/service employment and welfare. Staff roles and responsibilities are outlined in the [SFA Policy Manual](#).

The Student Role in Shared Governance

Students are free, individually and collectively, to express their views on issues of institutional policy and on matters of interest to the student body. The University seeks to ensure that students have appropriate input into the making of major policy, program, procedure, and budget decisions. The Student Government Association (SGA) serves as the collective voice of the student body. The role and responsibilities of the Senate are described in detail in the [SGA Bylaws](#). The President of the University, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Chief Diversity Officer and the Dean of Students must maintain a close working relationship with the Student Government officers. Many other recognized student organizations and groups

provide valuable advice to the university administration on matters that are of particular interest to their membership or to students in general.

The university administration will use both formal and informal means in order to maintain an awareness of the needs and view of the students. The opinions of students are sought, heard, and considered in major decisions affecting the University.

The Administration Role in Shared Governance

The responsibility of administrators in shared governance is to form and articulate a vision for the University, to provide strategic leadership, and to manage its resources, finances, external affairs, and operations.

Administrators participate in the shared governance process in a manner designed to foster the smooth, efficient, and effective management of the University, while involving faculty, staff, and students. Administrative roles and responsibilities are outlined in the [SFA Policy Manual](#).

The Board of Regents Role in Shared Governance

The governance of Stephen F. Austin State University is vested by law in the Board of Regents. Within the limits set by the Texas State Constitution and the federal and state laws, the Board of Regents is the final authority in all matters affecting the institution, and it exercises jurisdiction over the institution's financial, educational, and other policies and its relation with the state and federal government. Board of Regents roles and responsibilities are outlined in the [SFA Policy Manual](#) and the [Board of Regents Rules and Regulations](#).

Broad Goals for Share Governance Procedures

The University's published policies and procedures and the state's rules and regulations are the authoritative frameworks within which shared governance operates. The spirit of shared governance requires all parties to seek mutually acceptable recommendations. When compromise and concurrence cannot be achieved, rationale for the administrative decision should be provided in written form to the involved parties who may present a written statement of their position and/or any objections to the decision as part of the institution's or unit's record on the issue. However, the spirit of shared governance requires that the administrative rejection of shared governance recommendations be rare and for compelling reasons. Once a decision is reached, all parties should be supportive of the implementation process.

Each year in March, the President, Provost, and representatives from Faculty Senate, Chair's Forum, and Dean's Council shall meet to review and update this document.

¹ The following resources and documents have been utilized in developing the conceptual ideas, definitions, framework, language, etc.

AAUP Resources on Shared Governance:

<https://www.aaup.org/our-programs/shared-governance/resources-governance>

AGB Statement on Governance:

https://agb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2017_statement_sharedgovernance.pdf#:~:text=This%20Statement%20on%20Shared%20Governance%2C%20approved%20by%20the,achieve%20and%20support%20healthy%20and%20high-functioning%20shared%20governance.

University of Arizona "Memorandum of Understanding on Shared Governance":

<https://facultygovernance.arizona.edu/find-policy/shared-governance-ua>

Illinois State University "Policy on Shared Governance":

<https://illinoisstate.edu/administration/>

University of Washington "Shared Governance at the UW":

<https://www.washington.edu/informedchoice/shared-governance/>

University of Northern Alabama "Shared Governance Document":

<https://www.una.edu/sharedgovernance/sg-document,-2020-21.1-5-21.pdf>

University of Louisiana Monroe "Principles of Shared Governance":

https://www.ulm.edu/sharedgovernance/documents/ulm_principles_of_shared_governance.pdf

Draft 4/14/2021