

GUSTAVUS SHARED GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

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In 2013 the Gustavus Adolphus College Board of Trustees created a Shared Governance Working Group. This document is the product of working group deliberations that drew on various sources and took into account differing perspectives. Most notably, the working group relied heavily on input gathered through a series of well-attended open meetings under the umbrella title “Revitalizing Our Covenant: A Discussion of Shared Governance at Gustavus, In Which the Trustees, Administration, and Faculty Work Together to Understand Working Together.”

Effective governance is a shared responsibility and is essential for a healthy academic community. We recognize the need for the active engagement of all members of the community in order to live the Gustavus mission and core values to their fullest extent. This recognition is consonant with the liberal arts and Lutheran higher education traditions and positions Gustavus Adolphus College with confidence and high aspiration for the 21st century and beyond.

With this document, the Board, Administration, and Faculty of Gustavus Adolphus College clarify and recommit to the foundational principles and best practices of a shared governance model, which also undergird the College’s Amended Constitution (By-Laws) and Faculty Manual. The intention of this document is to contextualize shared governance as discussed in the Constitution, Faculty Manual, and other properly enacted policy documents of the College, and not to amend or replace them. While this document is mostly concerned with the relationship between the three principal shared governance parties, namely the Board, the Faculty, and the Administration, we also recognize the importance of staff and students in fostering and maintaining a productive and healthy community of learners.

PRINCIPLES

Mission and Vision: The entire Gustavus Adolphus College community participates in fulfilling the College’s mission and envisioning its future. Tradition and best practice bring the Board of Trustees, the Administration, and the Faculty together in a cooperative spirit of engagement around shared governance in order that the College’s mission might be realized.

Academic Excellence: Students are at the center of our mission, and all parties to these principles commit to operate in a way that prioritizes academic excellence and student academic success in both the short and long term.

Strategic & Financial Planning: The College’s mission and vision will be realized through effective advance planning with respect to programs, facilities, and related resources. This planning is an essential joint effort in our approach to shared governance. Strategic and financial planning will be led by the Administration and approved by the Board. It will feature early and continuous involvement from the Faculty and, where appropriate, other interested members of the community. Planning aims to anticipate institutional challenges and determine overall strategic direction to create and maintain distinction. This allows the prioritization of objectives, which should act to reduce unpleasant surprises and provide a context for discussing trade-offs and resource allocation. All parties are responsible for playing their part – initiating discussions early and digging in to craft solutions ahead of need.

Budgeting: Budget development and execution is primarily the domain of the Administration. Although necessarily including elements that are confidential, budgeting will be done with the early and continuous involvement of the Internal Budget Committee (IBC) or its successor, consulting relevant constituencies as appropriate. The internal budgeting process should recognize the formal governance role afforded to the Faculty¹ by providing for representation on the IBC or its successor through standard faculty procedures.

Curriculum: Curriculum development and execution within resource constraints is primarily the domain of the Faculty in accordance with the 1966 Statement. When disagreements arise relating to curriculum development or execution, the parties involved should work to (a) respect and, wherever possible, concur with faculty judgment on these matters; and (b) maintain open lines of communication until a final decision has been reached. As in matters of faculty status, final curricular decisions “should be exercised adversely (to faculty judgment) only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty.”²

Faculty Status: In matters of faculty status, the composition of the faculty, as well as processes for appointment, advancement, and termination are all articulated in the Faculty Manual. Once the Faculty has exercised its professional judgment regarding appointment and advancement, the Board and Administration commit to generally respect that judgment in keeping with the 1966 Joint Statement. In particular, for high-profile faculty appointments (e.g., Distinguished Endowed Chairs, Artists-in-Residence) the Board, Administration, and Faculty commit to communicate clearly so that the full range of qualifications is reflected in the position description at the outset of any search.

¹ AAUP 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities.

² AAUP 1966 Statement.

Selection of President: The Board selects the President. It commits to engage a diverse set of members of the community and to provide formal roles for the Faculty, Administration, and Board in the search process. The final decision should seek to concur with the sentiment of the working group convened for purposes of the search.

Selection of Chief Academic Officer: Selection of the Chief Academic Officer should be a joint effort including the Faculty, Administration, and members of the Board. The President's recommendation to the Board for appointment should take into account the considerations of the Faculty, Administration, and Board, and the basis for the recommendation should be communicated to the Board.

Reviews: For all employees, the ethic of performance reviews should be honest and developmental in the interest of joint effort and shared governance.

Presidential reviews will be conducted in accordance with a Board policy made available to the College community and consist of a mix of annual reviews and comprehensive reviews as defined in that policy. The contents of these reviews will not be public, but their occurrence should be known and all members of the Board should have access to their contents. (The President, though a member of the Board, will naturally have limited access to some elements of the review file.) This approach recognizes the formal governance role played by the Faculty by providing a specific mechanism for its inclusion in any comprehensive review of the President.

The President will establish the process for evaluating the Provost's performance. That process will conform to the College's governing documents. The process, among other things, will provide a role for faculty participation. Again, the contents of these reviews will not be public, but their occurrence should be known and members of the faculty should have the opportunity to provide input.

Communication: With this document the Board, Administration, and Faculty of Gustavus Adolphus College recommit to open, honest, and respectful communication while pledging to maintain confidentiality when appropriate. We further pledge to address serious disagreements by developing and regularly exercising a shared mechanism to improve communication and to engage in productive conflict resolution strategies as appropriate. In support of a culture of continuous improvement, our individuals and organizational entities will also communicate to provide and obtain constructive, developmental advice.

APPENDIX

Governance practices requiring clarification via a collaborative process, which should be initiated by the primarily responsible body

1. Selection and review of the President and Provost.

***Primary Responsibility for Selection and Review of the President: Board;
Primary responsibility for Selection and Review of the Provost: President***

The Board, Administration, and Faculty agree that the selection and review of the leadership of the College shall be conducted in accord with the College's governing documents and the widely accepted best practices of higher education shared governance in the United States. We pledge to work cooperatively towards a future in which such best practices are documented, standard procedure at Gustavus.

2. Faculty Status

Primary Responsibility for Determining Faculty Status: Faculty

Gustavus has long subscribed to the norm that "Faculty status and related matters are primarily a faculty responsibility; this area includes appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal."³ Despite this general consensus, the matter of faculty status may, in some particular instances, intersect strongly enough with Administrative or Board interests to benefit from engagement deeper than routine concurrence. We seek to work collectively to anticipate such intersections and develop a protocol specified in the Faculty Manual for dealing with them.

3. Curriculum Development and Implementation

***Primary Responsibility for Curriculum Development and Implementation:
Faculty***

The mission of the College is advanced by adhering to the broadly accepted principle that "the faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process."⁴ Each governance constituency pledges to collectively develop a mechanism, based on clear two-way communication, to resolve any curricular disputes.

³ AAUP 1966 Statement

⁴ AAUP 1966 Statement.

4. Strategic Plan Development and Resource Allocation

Primary Responsibility for Strategic Plan Development and Resource Allocation: Administration

All decisions regarding resource allocation and the offering of curricular and co-curricular programs ought to be driven by the College's strategic priorities. Because these priorities intersect the core concerns of all constituencies, and because prioritization inherently involves tradeoffs, strategic planning ought to be a prime example of joint effort and shared governance. The Board, Administration, and Faculty commit to develop a college wide strategic plan through a shared governance process. Furthermore, all parties will seek to work collaboratively to ensure that future resource allocations are in harmony with this strategic vision.

5. Disagreement Resolution

Primary Responsibility for Disagreement Resolution: The entire community⁵

We must make good on our pledge to develop and regularly exercise a shared mechanism to improve communication and deal with outstanding governance questions before they have a chance to become acute. Although our priority is to resolve disagreements without allowing them to become conflicts, we will develop conflict resolution mechanisms for use when needed.

6. Ongoing Self-Assessment of Shared Governance Structures and Mechanisms

Primary Responsibility for Self-Assessment: President

We will develop specific practices for ongoing self-assessment of shared governance structures and mechanisms including regular review of this document.

⁵ The collaborative clarification process is to be initiated by the President.