Chapter 2  Competing Views of Shared Governance

My apple tree will never get across  
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
He only says, “Good fences make good neighbors”.  
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
If I could put a notion in his head:  
“Why do they make good neighbors? Isn’t it  
Where there are cows?  
But here there are no cows.  

Robert Frost, Mending Wall

Whenever anyone raises the topic of shared governance with me, I ask them what they mean by shared governance. The responses are always different. Some see shared governance as an equal partnership between faculty, administrators and staff. Others see share governance as creating a set of fences and rules of engagement. Some see it as a consultative process. And many aren’t really sure what it is.

How to properly view shared governance is one of the more vexing questions that face colleges and universities. It is hard to disagree that it is desirable for faculties, governing boards and college and university administrations to share governance. Almost all agree that effective shared governance is the best way to tackle the difficult issues facing today’s colleges and universities, by reaching consensus on goals and strategies. While there is wide support for shared governance, there is less agreement as to exactly what shared governance means and how it should operate.

This lack of agreement about the definition of shared governance makes it difficult to effectively share governance. Several faculty members I’ve known view shared governance as the right to have an equal say in almost all important decisions, which amounts to an effective veto over board decisions. Boards sometimes view shared governance as seeking faculty input on decisions, but with the full right to disregard the input even when it comes to academic issues traditionally reserved for faculty. Presidents and other administrators usually view shared governance as a way for their two most important consistencies, faculty and boards, to interact with each other in a productive way. But administrators are often frustrated when they are unable to manage the conflict that inevitably arises.

The biggest barrier to effective shared governance is failure to understand and agree on the definition and parameters. Because there is not a commonly accepted definition of effective shared governance, even those faculty members, administrators and board members who sincerely aspire to share governance are too often disappointed with the process. Worse yet, because each have different cultures and different views of shared governance, they are likely to become frustrated, viewing the other parties’ commitment to share governance as insincere. Too frequently, parties withdraw from patient and effective participation in the process.

Philosophically, many faculty view shared governance as rules of engagement that involve a set of fences or boundaries as to who has the right to make or participate in important decisions. In the view of faculty, shared governance is a right long associated with academic traditions. Shared governance, many say, should not interfere with their independence and the independence of their departments. Boards, on the other hand, are apt to think of shared governance as a way to consider faculty input.
Their expectation, though, is that if faculty members are heard, they will have the obligation to support what the board ultimately decides. In practice, these contrary views can subvert effective governance and devolve into recriminations. Honest and open discussion of what shared governance is and isn’t can be the first step to avoid these unhappy situations.

This chapter serves as a vehicle for boards, faculties and administrations to consider different views of shared governance. I argue that shared governance is more than a set of rigid boundaries or fuzzy aspirations, but is a concrete way of aligning priorities, while respecting the traditional domains of faculty and administrators.

Five Views of Shared Governance.

As I’ve talked to faculty, board members and college presidents over the past twenty years, each seems to have a slightly different take on shared governance, falling into five general categories.

*Perspective One: Shared Governance as Equal Rights to Governance.*

Shared Governance as “equal rights to governance” involves the most literal interpretation of the word “shared” in shared governance. It views the word “shared” as “share and share alike.” As such, all important decisions at a college should be made jointly. This view of shared governance effectively gives the faculty a veto over board decisions and, when taken to its full extent, the board a veto over faculty decisions.

Other college presidents tell me that many faculty members in their institutions hold this view of shared governance, though most would not apply “share and share alike” in the same way to decisions traditionally within the faculty domain: decisions on hiring, tenure, curriculum, and graduation requirements.

Shared governance as equal rights to governance, while attractive in theory, is problematic in practice. Because it effectively gives faculty veto power over decisions within the board’s primary responsibility and gives boards veto power over matters primarily within faculty responsibility, it is a sure formula for deadlock and indecision. For some faculty members, deadlock and indecision over decisions central to the college is not all bad—it preserves the decentralization and independence they value. This, of course, is unacceptable for boards in discharging their fiduciary responsibilities over the affairs of their colleges or universities.

State laws governing nonprofit organizations and best practices require the boards of all nonprofit organizations to act with care in their stewardship of the organization. Failure to make needed and important decisions is a violation of the board’s duty of good stewardship.

The Association of Governing Board’s publication, Strategic Imperatives: New Priorities for Higher Education (p. 60) warned against the danger of indecision in higher education. It warned: “Despite higher education’s tradition of thorough, broadly inclusive, and perhaps unhurried deliberations, boards may also need to push institutions to become more nimble and more deadline-driven in their decision making.” While the AGB recognizes the need for “integrative decision making” involving faculty, administrations and board, it also recognizes that boards “need to be more assertive in expecting institutions to achieve needed change more quickly and in pushing institutions to reflect on and make changes in their decision-making processes.”
While boards are ultimately responsible under state law for all aspects of their institutions, including policies involving teaching and learning, it is appropriate that boards delegate primary responsibility for academic standards and academic programs to the faculty. As such, boards should exercise the privilege of overruling faculty decisions very sparingly. Governance over core academic decisions is not equal; it is presumptively with the faculty. Instead, boards should ensure educational quality by informing themselves of important aspects of the educational program and then hold the administration and faculty accountable for ensuring that student learning outcomes are achieved and measured.

As recognized by the Association of Governing Boards in its Statement on Board Responsibility for the Oversight of Educational Quality, the board should defer to faculty decisions in the heart of the academic area. Deference to the faculty should not be blind. The AGB (page 1) states:

> While academic administrators and faculty members are responsible for setting learning goals, developing and offering academic courses and programs, and assessing the quality of those courses and programs, boards cannot delegate away their governance responsibilities for educational quality. The board responsibility in this area is to recognize and support faculty’s leadership in continuously improving academic programs and outcomes, while also holding them – through institutional administrators – accountable for educational quality.

I encourage boards not to overrule or veto the academic decisions of the faculty simply because they disagree. Instead, boards should respect faculty decisions unless they were recklessly made or deeply and clearly inconsistent with the best interests of the institution.

The view of shared governance as equal rights to governance is appealing at first glance, but will only lead to disappointment. And in some cases, should a board or administration commit to equal sharing of decision making with the faculty, it would set back true shared governance and constituencies would most likely become frustrated with the ensuing gridlock.

Better views and definitions of shared governance have evolved and should be explored.

**Perspective Two: Shared Governance as Consultation.**

The view of shared governance as an obligation to consult with the faculty before major decisions are made is a view often held by board members. Board members and presidents understand that consultation with faculty aids in better decision making, as faculty are closer to the issues than many board members. Board members assume that if faculty views are considered and if faculty members sometimes “see their fingerprints” on decisions, they are more apt to work with the board in implementing these decisions.

While consultation with the faculty is important in matters of the direction of the institution, it’s only effective when the consultation is careful and thoughtful and not when it is little more than window dressing. Effective consultation happens when:

- Faculty members are brought in early enough in the process that they help shape decisions.
- Administrations and board are transparent, providing sufficient information for faculty to participate meaningfully in discussion.
- The central role of faculty in academic matters is respected and, better yet, cherished.
Faculty members understand the timeframe in which decisions must be made and why that timeframe is selected.
Faculty members understand their role in the decision-making process, whether it is merely advisory or a requested endorsement of a position.
Faculty members are informed in a timely way of the ultimate decision and why the ultimate decision was made.

Consultation with faculty is a necessary component of shared governance, but consultation alone is not sufficient for effective shared governance. Even though they’ve been consulted, many faculty members are prone to feel they have not been listened to if decisions don’t go their way. Further, for matters at the heart of the academic program, faculty members do not want to simply be consulted. They believe that they own the academic program.

Viewing shared governance as seeking faculty input is an incomplete view. It does neither address what role faculty have in actually shaping policy nor does it address how decisions are made when boards and faculty disagree.

**Perspective Three: Shared Governance as a Partnership**

In my observation, many board members would like to view shared governance as a partnership with faculty and administrators in coming to a consensus. Many simply hope that everyone can just get along and get on the same page. They hope that all constituencies of the college or university will work together in good faith by seeing the same problems and working toward the best solutions. As in business partnership, different partners might have different day-to-day responsibilities, but on issues of directions and strategy, they should work in partnership to build consensus.

The partnership model is a helpful theoretical construct for thinking about shared governance, but it leaves some questions unanswered. Partnerships, at their best, entail a set of duties and responsibilities. Partners have duties toward each other. They have a duty of care, to be careful and prudent in using the resources of the institution to advance its mission. In the case of colleges and universities, this means that all constituencies have a duty to use the resources of the institution to advance student learning. These responsibilities are consistent with what University of Pennsylvania Professor Robert Zemsky, chair of the Learning Alliance for Higher Education, said to me a few years ago: that shared governance should really be shared responsibility.

Likewise, effective business partnerships assume that partners are fully transparent with each other and act with a duty of loyalty. This means that partners will not unfairly profit from the institution in a way that interferes with the mission. In addition, business partnerships assume the responsibility of good faith and fair dealing among all partners, characteristics that would clearly foster shared governance within colleges and universities.

This view of shared governance was discussed in the AGB’s publication, *The Leadership Imperative*, which considered effective leadership of a college to be one that “links the president, the faculty and the board together in a well-functioning partnership purposefully devoted to well-defined, broadly affirmed institutional visions.”
This vision of shared governance is a good one as an aspiration. If the faculty, the president and the board could truly act as partners, major decisions of the college would be easier to reach and would have much more buy-in, making them easier to implement.

But this view of shared governance is overly simplistic and difficult to implement for four central reasons.

First, under both state law governing nonprofit corporations and best practices, board members have fiduciary duties of care and loyalty that they cannot abdicate. While a board can delegate primary responsibility for building, refining and evaluating student learning outcomes, it cannot, by law or by good practices, abdicate the responsibility to oversee all aspect of the college, including academic programs. If faculty decision making is not timely or does not use the resources of the college well, boards must not turn a blind eye.

Second, within colleges and universities, planning as partners may produce ineffective decisions seemingly made by committee -- crafted to please each constituency but without integrity. Horse trading in higher education (i.e. we’ll keep this unproductive program, if you’ll consent to eliminating this other unproductive program) is not the most effective way to make decisions. And there is a danger that, in the name of achieving agreement among the constituencies, the “partners” will agree to the least common denominator.

Third, both boards and faculty are unlikely to allow each other to become true partners in areas they consider to be their own domain. If board members truly view shared governance as a partnership, they are likely to move from overseeing academic programs by asking probing and thoughtful questions to insisting on more input on academic decisions. Faculty members are unlikely to permit boards to “get into the weeds” on academic decisions. Likewise, if faculty members were to ask to be “partners” in investing endowment funds, board members would surely balk.

Fourth, and most important, faculty cultures and board cultures are fundamentally different, making a true partnership difficult to achieve. Unlike a business partnership, where partners have a common interest in maximizing profits, the goals of faculty and boards are not so easily aligned. Faculty members tend to be more concerned with the quality of the student learning experience than whether the budget is met. Board members, as fiduciaries, need to be concerned about both, but tend to place a much great emphasis on budget matters than faculty members do.

But the difference in culture, from my experience, is more than differing views of how to measure success. Faculties and boards view accountability in very different ways. Many faculty members view accountability as the right to participate in the decision, while most board members view accountability as measuring and achieving specific results.

These differing cultures mean that it is unrealistic to think that faculty members, board members and administrators will act like business partners, who are usually more homogeneous in their views. As such, a more thoughtful model is needed.

*Perspective Four: Shared Governance as a Defined Set of Rules of Engagement.*
Some people see inescapable tension between faculty culture and board culture. In their view, this tension needs to be managed through establishing boundaries, with rules of engagement for when boundaries overlap. Then there’s the tension between state law, which holds boards responsible for all aspects of their institutions, and academic tradition, which yields major responsibility for the academic program to the faculty. This, too, calls for boundaries and rules of engagement.

The best statement of shared governance as a defined set of rules of engagement is the AAUP’s *Statement of Government of Colleges and Universities*. Underlying this statement is the assumption that good fences make good neighbors. This seminal statement of what it means to share governance was adopted in 1966 and remains the standard at many colleges and universities today. Not only do many faculty members view it as the gold standard in how to share governance, but its principles are often incorporated in faculty handbooks, state university regulations, union contracts and policy statements.

The thesis of this statement is that governance of colleges and universities should be a “joint effort”. It states:

> The variety and complexity of tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board administration, faculty, students, and others.

The *Statement of Government of Colleges and Universities* allocates primary responsibility for the operation of colleges and universities to various domains. It identifies primary areas of responsibility for each constituency and then creates a system of checks and balances.

According to the AAUP *Statement*, faculty holds the primary role in academic matters. Specifically, “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 education process.” The AAUP *Statement* recognizes the ultimate authority of the board, but states that the authority of the board or president should “be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, for reasons communicated to the faculty.” And even when a board communicates its disagreement, the *Statement* provides that the faculty should “have opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the president or board.”

The AAUP provides that the faculty has primary responsibility in these areas, which covers the academic waterfront:

- Course requirements
- Degree requirements
- Faculty status, including hiring and tenure decisions
- Appointment of academic department chairs
- How faculty representative structures are selected and structured

Within these primary areas of faculty responsibility, the AAUP *Statement* recognizes that certain faculty decisions are subject to review. On matters of faculty appointments, tenure and promotion, the *Statement* recognizes limited authority of the president and board to review faculty decisions. The statement provides that “the governing board and president should, on questions of faculty status, as in other matters where the faculty has primary responsibility, concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail.” The AAUP *Statement* does
not define “compelling reasons”, but many believe compelling reasons include economic exigency, violation of discrimination laws, clear violations of other institutional policies and procedures or decisions by the faculty that are so reckless that no reasonable faculty could make a similar decision.

Notwithstanding the Statement’s views on the primacy of faculty, the AAUP Statement does acknowledge that the board has “final institutional authority.” It advocates that the board “undertake appropriate self-limitation,” by which it means boards should delegate authority over academic issues to the faculty and authority over administrative matters to administrative officers.

Though it advocates for broad delegation of authority, the Statement recognizes that the board, within its domain, has primary responsibility in these areas:

- Ensuring fidelity to mission
- Managing endowment
- Finances of the college – both for operating and capital
- Personnel policies

The AAUP Statement puts heavy responsibility on the president for “operating the communication system that links the components of the academic community.” It notes that the “leadership role of the president is supported by delegation of authority from the board and faculty.” This statement is not consistent with state non-profit organization law, which declares that the delegation is from the board, not the faculty, to the president. Still, it acknowledges that for a president to be effective, the president must be accountable to both the faculty and the board of the institution.

The AAUP Statement recognizes that the following are in the primary domain of the president:

- Planning for the institution
- Maintaining instructional resources and developing new resources
- Managing non-academic activities
- Serving as chief spokesperson

Though the AAUP Statement recognizes that the faculty, the board and the administration have different areas of primary responsibility, it also appropriately recognizes that these areas of responsibility overlap. In these areas, the Statement seems to establish “rules of engagement” when responsibilities intersect.

In the area of strategic planning, for example, while the AAUP Statement provides that the president is the “chief planning officer” of the institution, it recognizes that planning, at its best, is a shared process. The Statement is probably correct when it notes that the degree to which the president “can persuade others” to see his or her visions for the institution and “persuade others to see them and to work toward them will tend to constitute the chief measure of the president’s administration.”

When it comes to outdated or moribund programs, the AAUP Statement recognizes that “the president must at times, with or without support, infuse new life into a department.” But in addressing these issues, the statement admonishes the president to work within the concept of tenure and “utilize the judgment of the faculty.”
The AAUP Statement was jointly formulated by the AAUP, the American Council on Education (ACE) and the AGB. Specifically, the AGB’s executive committee, in November of 1966, recognized the Statement as a significant step forward in the clarification of the responsive roles of governing boards, faculties and administrations and commended it to its member governing boards.

The AGB’s view about the AAUP Statement since then has not been one of full embrace. In its 2010 Statement on Board Responsibility for Institutional Governance, it noted that much had changed in the four decades since it commended the AAUP Statement. Among the changes noted by the AGB included the increasing number of older students, the declining proportion of full-time tenure-track faculty, the challenging economics of higher education and the increasing call for institutional accountability.

Though the AGB did not repudiate the AAUP Statement, it established its own broad principle in its Statement on Board Responsibility for Institutional Governance, published in 2010. Its central principal is that the “ultimate responsibility for governance of the institution (or systems) rests in its governing board.” The AGB statement paints with a broader brush than the AAUP Statement and is less rules-oriented. But it does acknowledge that boards must work within the “culture of decision making in the academy”, chief of which is shared governance. It further acknowledges the “status accorded faculty because of their central role in teaching and generating new knowledge, creates the need for deliberation and participation of faculty and other key constituencies in decision making.”

Striking some of the same themes as the AAUP Statement, the AGB Statement included the importance of according “faculty with significant responsibility for and control of curriculum and pedagogy.” At the same time, the AGB Statement does not give a blank check to faculty. It states that boards must be well-informed about the academic program and monitor the quality of academic programs. It states that the board should “reserve the right to review, challenge and occasionally override decisions or proposals it judges to be inconsistent with mission, educational quality, or fiscal integrity.”

While the AGB and AAUP statements strike similar themes, there are two important differences concerning shared governance. The first difference is in approach. The AGB Statement could be said to fly at a 30,000-foot level, leaving the exact details of how to share governance to individual institutions. The AAUP Statement is much more granular, providing more of a playbook of “rules of engagement” for all colleges and universities, whether they are independent colleges, flagship public universities or community colleges.

The second difference is more philosophical. The AAUP Statement, if followed, seems to require board and administrative deference to faculty on administrative matters except in exceptional cases, while the AGB Statement seems to establish a lower bar for when the board reviews academic decisions. The AGB statement recognizes that overriding faculty decisions will only be done occasionally, but that the board may do so when it judges faculty decisions to be inconsistent with mission, fiscal responsibility or educational quality. The AGB Statement recognizes that efforts to build consensus between faculty and boards can’t interfere with timely decisions. Boards and faculty should collaborate on important decisions, but boards should also “establish deadlines for their consultation with the clear understanding that failure to act in accordance with these deadlines will mean that the next highest level in the governance process will have to proceed with decision making.”

In a subsequent statement, the AGB defined the board’s proper role in overseeing educational quality. In its 2011 Statement of Board Responsibility for the Oversight of Education Quality, the AGB noted that,
among other things that boards must ensure that “student learning is assessed, data about outcomes are gathered, results are shared with the board and all involved constituents, and deficiencies and improvements are tracked.” The Statement also provided that boards are “responsible for approving and monitoring the financial resources committed to support a high-quality educational experience.” While the Statement cautioned boards not to “micromanage” student learning, it made it clear that boards should not simply defer to faculty in key academic matters.

Both the AAUP Statement and the AGB Statement, though not perfectly aligned, are useful frameworks in thinking about shared governance. But adherence to either is not sufficient for aligning priorities of the colleges and universities. They establish rules of engagement, not systems for alignment.

I learned about the limits of the AAUP Statement a few years ago when our chief academic officer disagreed with the recommendation of the faculty committee charged with recommending candidates for tenure. Though a department unanimously recommended a faculty member for tenure, the faculty committee responsible for recommending on behalf of the full faculty was divided. The committee ultimately recommended tenure, but the chief academic officer determined that the candidate did not meet the requirements for tenure published in the faculty handbook. The chief academic officer and the faculty committee read the Faculty Handbook quite differently. I agreed with the chief academic officer and informed both the faculty member and the faculty committee of my reasons. The faculty member took the matter to a second committee of the faculty for its redetermination, but my ultimate decision was the same – not to recommend tenure to the board.

While we followed the spirit of the AAUP Statement and our faculty handbook, the discussion on campus centered on whether the circumstances under which I disagreed were “exceptional” or consistent with faculty primacy in these matters. We debated the rules of engagement and blogs were hastily put up, but the heated debate on the rules of engagement diverted attention from what really needed to be discussed – different interpretations of the faculty handbook and the larger issue of what we should expect from faculty. Feelings were so bruised after these heated discussions that it took several years to develop an agreement as to how to interpret the requirements of the faculty handbook.

The AAUP Statement, while a good starting point for institutions to consider when determining how to share governance, but should not be considered a one-size-fits-all prescription. Institutions do differ. Public institutions with elected boards may have different charges than private, self-perpetuating boards. Community colleges with a lower percentage of tenured faculty members are different than colleges with a high percentage of tenured or tenure-track faculty. Likewise, institutions that are unionized are different from those where governance is decentralized within departments.

Rules of engagement are most helpful when constituencies disagree, but are less helpful when an institution is addressing planning and institutional direction. Rules of engagement, from my experience as both an attorney and a college president, don’t always lead to open and honest communication. When planning for the future of the institution, fences neither facilitate debate nor make good neighbors. Boards, presidents and faculty must get beyond a rulebook on how to share governance to develop systems to truly align priorities, measure outcomes and hold each other accountable.

*Perspective Five: Shared Governance as a System to Align Priorities.*
The final view of shared governance views shared governance as a system to align priorities. More specifically, as a system of open communication to align priorities, create a culture of shared responsibility for the welfare of the institution and to create a system of checks and balances to ensure the institution stays mission-centered.

This definition views shared governance as more than a set of rules of engagement and more realistic than a “feel good partnership.” It rejects the notion that good fences always make good neighbors.

Effective institutions are those where key constituencies have aligned priorities. It is easier for businesses to align priorities because the bottom line is much more likely to play a central role in decision making. In not-for-profit organizations, the bottom line is relevant to sustainability, but their raison d’etre concerns non-financial outcomes.

Hospitals learned long ago that if the goals of physicians, the board and the hospital administration can be aligned, they will better be able to achieve the triple goals of quality patient outcomes, affordability and financial sustainability. In the same vein, institutions of higher education must seek alignment to the triple goals of quality student learning outcomes, affordability and financial sustainability. Hospitals have an easier time achieving physician alignment because they have the financial resources to create economic incentives for alignment. Institutions of higher education need to develop a commitment to effectively sharing governance to develop such alignment.

This definition of shared governance as a system to align priorities has four components, each meriting further exploration.

Systems of transparency and open communication.

Shared governance, at its best, is based on systems of open communication between faculty, administrators and boards. Open communication requires that all involved in governance are transparent with each other. Presidents sometimes withhold information to avoid disappointing or causing discomfort to others. Faculty members can avoid being transparent under the theory that the academic program is theirs and providing information might threaten their independence. And board members may assume that faculty members simply don’t have the interest or knowledge to understand, let alone participate in, the process of attending to the finances of the college.

Without transparency and clear communication, shared governance will not work. Decisions are only as good as the information they are based on. If different constituencies have access to different sets of information, they cannot be expected to develop common priorities.

A commitment to jointly consider and answer generative questions.

It is not possible to develop common priorities if the board, the faculty and the administration are only involved in the daily issues of shared governance. Rather, each constituency must be more deliberate in considering the philosophic issues facing the college. Who are we? How do we know we are effective? What do we need to do to get there?
I advise my students to ask the “who and why question” before asking the “what question.” Students should ask who they are and why they are that way before they ask what they want to be. Our institutions of higher education should take the same approach. Ask who they want to be and why, before developing the strategies and tactics to get there.

The approach of asking the “who and why questions” are consistent with the advice of Richard Chait in exhorting nonprofit institutions to focus their attention on generative issues. In Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards, Chait identifies the core of generative thinking by boards as acting creatively in discerning problems and engaging in “sense making.” By the nature of their training, faculty members are particularly adept at engaging in high level discussion in this way. And board members, most of whom are appointed to the board because of their ability to engage in “sense-making” within their businesses, professions or communities, are also well-positioned to engage in this level of inquiry.

According to Chait, generative thinking considers upstream issues: the issues at the headwaters. Generative thinking in colleges and universities focuses on the more philosophical issues. Who are we? Why do we do what we do? How did we get to where we are and how does it inform where we are going? Where do we want to be in five years? Ten years? True and effective strategies to advance mission and move an institution forward in a changing world can’t be developed until these who, why, how and where questions are asked. In effective organizations, these questions are asked before the “what” questions: What are our strategies? What are our tactics? What do we do first?

Chait aptly notes that generative thinking involves questions of values, culture, assumptions and values. Sharing a discussion about values and culture with the faculty can aid in developing a baseline trust with the faculty to ask the difficult, higher-order questions.

Jointly developed strategic goals and trust about tactics.

Once the higher order questions are discussed, it is more likely that the institution will be able to identify the direction in which it is going. Strategies, which are plans designed to achieve agreed-upon aims, can follow from these discussions. So often strategic planning at colleges and universities is difficult because of disagreement about the direction of the institution. Without that agreement, strategies are almost impossible to develop.

Likewise, this discussion will help build the trust necessary to support each constituency to develop tactics within their areas of primary responsibility. Many of the tactics to achieve strategies can be delegated to various constituencies. For instance, once the goals concerning student learning outcomes have been addressed, as well as how to measure student learning outcome, it becomes much easier for the board to delegate the full authority to develop curriculum that will support student learning outcomes.

Shared set of metrics to measure success.

Discussing generative issues and developing mutually accepted strategies is only the first step. Effective systems of shared governance develop a series of agreed-upon metrics to measure success.
While boards are not effectively sharing governance when they get into the weeds of academic decisions, it is an appropriate role for boards to hold the faculty accountable for ensuring students achieve desired student learning outcomes. Boards should ask faculty to develop desired learning outcomes and to develop metrics to measure those outcomes. Boards should ask faculty why the outcomes are appropriate.

Likewise, engaged faculty members should ask boards about outcomes for the financial sustainability of their institutions. When faculty members ask questions about long-term maintenance of facilities or ways to have the financial strength to attract and retain quality faculty members, they are participating in shared governance in a proactive and helpful way. A shared discussion of resources with faculty can ensure that resources are best invested in quality student outcomes. On occasion, some board members may view faculty asking these questions as impertinent. But the heart of critical thinking, which faculty member adeptly teach their students, is to ask the difficult and sometimes impertinent questions.

Too often the metrics to measure success are too input-focused, centering on student credentials, dollars spent per student, or percentile ranking of faculty salaries, instead of output-oriented. The focus on inputs in higher education is in part because inputs are easier to measure. Output-oriented metrics, on the other hand, are sometimes more subjective and harder to measure. Whether students are achieving student learning outcomes is possible to measure, but measurements are not as exact.

Outcome measures go beyond measuring student learning outcomes within the classroom context. They might also involve student satisfaction, student retention, alumni satisfaction and placement and graduate school acceptance rates. Discussion with faculty of metrics to measure success is likely to be robust, and it’s likely to lead to greater trust between the board and the faculty.

**A system of effective checks and balances to ensure that the institution remains mission focused.**

Though the checks and balances described by the AAUP Statement and the AGB Statement are not sufficient for truly effective shared governance, they are a necessary component. Though matters of faculty appointments, tenure and promotion are primarily within the domain of faculty, the limited review of presidents and boards helps give the system integrity. And though curriculum is squarely within the domain of the faculty, shared governance and institutional quality is enhanced when the board asks tough questions and when the president reminds the faculty of the fiscal constraints associated with the programs.

Similarly, though budgets are within the domain of the board and the administration, it can be valuable to have faculty members discuss whether budgets sufficiently support student learning. At its best, the budget process is transparent. Difficult questions (and even impertinent questions) from the faculty should be regarded as important contributions to the debate. Difficult questions from faculty might lead to a desirable re-examination of the budget in a way that better serves the college.

This view of shared governance as a system is consistent with Robert Birnbaum’s distinction between “hard governance” and “soft governance.” Hard governance refers to the “structures, regulations, and systems of sanctions in an organization that define authority relationships”, while “soft governance” refers to “the systems of social connections and interactions in an organization that help to develop and
maintain individual and group norms.” Birnbaum, in his essay, *The End of Shared Governance: Looking Ahead or Looking Back*, argues that “hard governance makes little difference because most of the important decisions made in the university occur outside the formal system.” Quoting Michael Cohen and James March, Birnbaum notes: “Teachers decide if, and when, and what to teach. Students decide if, when and what to learn. Legislators and donors decide if, when, and what to support.”

Shared governance as a system recognizes both soft governance and hard governance. It acknowledges the importance of soft governance by recognizing the need to align the priorities of the faculty and board in order to meet effectively the many challenges ahead. Yet it also respects hard governance – the need for boards to supervise all aspects of the college. It also recognizes that there will be disagreements, the resolution of which is aided by the “hard governance checks and balances” of the AAUP and AGB statements.

This view of shared governance is also consistent with Richard Morrill’s charge to presidents to be “integral leaders” who forge “an embedded process of collaborative leadership to complement, supplement and reorient the limitations and the fragmentation of traditional academic governance.”

Shared governance as a process to align priorities does exactly this through the processes of transparency, open and fair discussion, and developing shared strategies and entrusting tactics to those implementing the tactics.

Shared governance as a process is the most sophisticated and nuanced view of shared governance. It recognizes that the primary goal of sharing governance is to align priorities of faculty, administrations, and boards and create effective ways to implement measure and refine priorities. Neither fences nor rules of engagement are sufficient. What is needed instead is a system of creating alignment to face the many challenges ahead.