

GUSTAVUS SHARED GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

Working Group: *Becky Bergman, Mark Braun, Dan Currell, Bill Frame, Jim Gale, Max Hailperin, Paul Saulnier, Kathi Tunheim, Ken Westphal*

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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 complement the Constitution, Faculty Manual and other properly enacted policy documents of the College, and not to amend or replace them.

PRINCIPLES

Academic Excellence: Shared governance at Gustavus is a joint effort among the members of the community for the achievement of academic excellence and the success of the College in its essential mission. Students are at the center of that mission, and all parties to these principles commit to operate in a way that prioritizes 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 naturally be led by the Administration and approved by the Board, but 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: Budgeting, though necessarily including elements that are confidential, 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 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

¹ AAUP 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities.

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.

Selection of President: The Board’s selection of a president, except in exigent circumstances, will be handled by engaging a diverse set of members of the community and providing 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 Other Administrative Officers: Selection of the Chief Academic Officer and the Treasurer should be a joint effort including the Faculty, Administration and members of the Board (again excepting exigent circumstances). 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 parties involved.

Presidential Review: 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.

² AAUP 1966 Statement.

A Culture of Performance Feedback: In the interest of joint effort and shared governance, simple, regular and meaningful performance feedback should be provided to all members of the Gustavus community. The ethic of this feedback should be positive and developmental.

Communication in the Face of Disagreements: 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 be proactive in our quest to prevent and manage serious disagreements by committing to develop and regularly exercise a shared mechanism to improve communication and deal with outstanding governance questions.

APPENDIX

*Governance practices requiring clarification
via a collaborative process*

1. Selection and Review of Institutional Officers

Primary Responsibility for Selection and Review of Institutional Officers: Board (for President) and President (for Chief Academic Officer and Treasurer)

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

All segments of the Gustavus governance structure have traditionally held that 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.

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.

³ AAUP 1966 Statement

⁴ AAUP 1966 Statement.

5. Disagreement Resolution

Primary Responsibility for Disagreement Resolution: The entire community

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