

Listening Session #4 29 September 2021

Professor Nichols delivered [opening remarks](#), and opened the floor to questions, which were sent directly to her via chat.

Deb Nichols

A lot of the questions I think that I am getting are things that would be examined by the working groups, such as, for instance, “what constituent groups aren't adequately represented and how might we more effectively do that?” would be directed to the workgroup “Staff, Student, and Other Voices.” There is a question here about continuing lectures, both senior and limited-term lectures, where they would fall, and that's something for that group to look at.

There is a place for you to submit your information to participate on a working group, and I would strongly encourage you to do that so that we can populate those groups and begin increasing the level of involvement for all of those who are interested in how we might transform shared governance here. And for those of you who already volunteered, thank you.

Q1

“What is the mechanism for getting the administration to buy into any revised model of shared governance?”

Deb Nichols

We are constrained in ways by the Indiana legislature, and if you look back to [Listening Session Three](#), I provided a description of what the law says, but also, in discussions that we've had with administration and the Board of Trustees, there's an openness to changing how we do shared governance. And I think having a structure where all of the various groups on campus have opportunities to meet at the University Council level with senior administrators could open up greater dialogue. But that is something that I would love people to brainstorm about both in the Structural Model Group, as well as the Cultural Change Group and any of the other groups where people want to think about this mechanism.

One other thing, and I mentioned this briefly before, but I would just like to reiterate it: we haven't done any kind of review of our shared governance in the Senate here on the West Lafayette campus. We have tried to revise our Bylaws without probably as much success as we would like. And so I think we have this opportunity right now to really think about how we go forward, and to think about how we encourage people to participate, whether it be in more of a formal structure, or whether it be in more informal kinds of structures, providing variable levels of engagement.

Q2

“Will the revised plan only apply to West Lafayette, or would it involve the regional campuses?”

Deb Nichols

The University Senate does have representatives from the regional campuses. I shared what we were doing here at West Lafayette with the Intercampus Faculty Council that has representatives from each of the regionals and IUPUI, and I have spoken with some folks from Purdue Northwest. And that would be part of the listening tour, if they are interested in speaking with us. I personally believe that the University Council should have representation from our Regional campuses. If we're thinking of these reforms as system-wide and not just campus-wide, then it would be important to make sure that they have a voice as well, but I would not presume to tell them that they needed to change what they did on their campus.

Q3

“You've mentioned plans to have a campus-wide referendum on the work this taskforce is doing, but I remain unclear how any proposal that comes out of this work will be endorsed or not by the campus, and who would be eligible to vote? What if you have low voter turnout? What standing would such a vote have, since it seems as though it would take place outside of our current structures of shared governance?”

Deb Nichols

Our vision was to have all of the groups that are represented by the institutional level structures be able to vote. Certainly, I think the Working Group and the Leadership Team could work together to figure out what that might look like. In 1964, I believe it was just the faculty who voted, but given that one of the objectives here is to open up shared governance to groups that have been historically uninvolved, I would think the Working Group would want more people voting—all of the people who have a stake in this. They did it by paper ballot back in 1964, mailing everything out and getting it back via mail ballot. We could do that in an electronic format, so that everybody would have the opportunity to have their vote count.

If there are any questions you have about one of the working groups that you want to ask, these are just basic initial charges I've worked with: we met with our consultant from Penn and he made suggestions about how to craft the working groups so that people could work on the various issues that would relate to our first principles. Our goals are to enhance governance across everyone on campus by providing opportunities for different levels of involvement. We shouldn't limit ourselves to thinking only about shared governance as what the structural model looks like at the institutional level, so the University Council and then faculty, staff, councils, student councils, etc. We really should be thinking about shared governance at multiple different levels: what happens in your schools or your colleges? What happens in your departments? And how could we further enhance that by giving people more opportunities to express their voice?

Q4

How will you balance the different governing bodies? Each of them gets a vote? What if the Senate says no, and all other groups say yes?

Deb Nichols

To form the Senate, all faculty members, not only the Executive Council, got to vote. So the idea here would be that all of the voices contributing to all of the bodies that are identified through this process to have councils will vote. So if the Senate put forward a resolution that said no, you still have many other folks on campus who could decide Yes, they want this. So it would be one person one vote.

Q5

How does this effort address the current exclusion of full-time instructors from classification as faculty?

Deb Nichols

If you look at the NYU model, they have tenure and tenure-track faculty together, and then they also full-time contract non-tenured faculty. So I sort of envision a group that encompasses those who are instructors, but don't fall under traditional faculty. Various working groups are charged with looking at this and evaluating the pros and cons of different ways of doing things. I'm hoping that people who don't fall into a traditional faculty classification will volunteer to be on the working groups.

Q6

Could you give an example of policies that could be voted on? Are these limited to policy involvement and enforcement or would it extend to quality of life issues?

Deb Nichols

So I think this means, under the structural model, I have identified current policies and procedures for revision. The reason that I have that there is that there are certain constraints on staff participation.

Brock Turner

Our policy [CSSAC's] has been written in since 1965. Like the Senate, it has had very little adjustment through the years. We're really structured as an advisory group. And I think we are in agreement that when we had to go through a change that impacted every single person on campus [during the COVID pandemic], we saw a great benefit to being in the same room together, and throwing out ideas and sharing in a different form of shared governance. Our policy would have to include this possible kind of shared governance into its model. As far as how CSSAC is formed, we take applications every year for people, as does MaPSAC. So we have areas of representation that we try to maintain within our committees. As we represent 3000+ staff employees, we understand some are able to participate more than others, just based on their roles, but we always try to represent them well and reach out to them so that whenever we're sitting in meetings, we can voice concerns for them as well. Some of the policy that might restrict us is that if you look at how we can influence policy changes or changes across campus, we do that in an advisory capacity to leadership.

Deb Nichols

I think that the purpose of having policies and procedures for revision is to make sure that as we further flesh out what this will look like, we ask if there are certain policies or procedures that would need to be revised? I have spoken with general counsel about some of these issues. There are two different committees on campus that look at policies and all policies and procedures. We would work with those committees to identify whether there are specific policies and procedures that need to be revised in order to fully support participation in restructured shared governance.

Q7

The Bylaws in the College of Engineering do include instructors as voting members of the faculty.

Deb Nichols

There are restrictions currently in our University Senate as to who qualifies as voting faculty. The Senate membership is restricted to tenured, tenure-track, and clinical faculty. So this example from the College of Engineering shows the possibility of doing shared governance on their college level differently from what happens at, in this case, the Senate level. So thank you for sharing that.

Q8

This process crosses multiple VP level staff at the university. Are all organizational units signed on to this approach?

Deb Nichols

I haven't spoken to all vice president-level staff. But I have spoken with the Board of Trustees and senior administration and the Provost's office, who have offered their support in this process, and are looking forward to seeing what we come up with.

Q9

Will the Purdue University Retirees Association (PURA) be represented in shared governance?

Deb Nichols

That question has come up several times; it's an important one. One of the other models that we had looked at was at Brown University, which uses a community model, and so they have alumni and retirees who serve on that broader University Council. I don't believe they have an individual council that's just specific to retirees. But they do have representatives to serve on the main one. There's a lot of value and institutional memory associated with people who retired from Purdue. And again, I'm not the one who should say, Yes, we should do that, or no, we should not do that. Those of you who are volunteering to serve on these working group will need to put forward the pros and cons of all of this and make decisions collectively on what we want it to look like.

Q10

I am gathering this effort is focusing on staff that are limited to the academic side only, meaning not those directly linked to physical facilities. Am I understanding that correctly?

Deb Nichols

This is important information for us to know, because I think it's vital that we have representation from everyone. CSSAC is the organization that represents physical facilities, so yes, you would have representation that way. Someone indicated in the chat that there used to be a separate organization for physical facilities, but they were forwarded into CSSAC ten years ago. People in physical facilities were pretty demoralized by folding in physical facilities to the broader CSSAC. So I would encourage you to volunteer or to send additional information so that this is something that can be considered by that Staff, Student, and Other Voices Working Group.

Q11

It seems as though the Protect Purdue working group's mission during COVID is different than shared governance as centered on the educational mission of the university. What do you see as the similarities and differences?

Deb Nichols

This is right. There were different priorities as COVID ramped up. And so there were a lot of discussions about protecting people on campus and administering surveys so we could know where people had concerns, and what level of concern and how burned out people were and what they really needed to continue to be as productive as was possible during this time. We also discussed things that the Provost would bring to us including promotion and tenure, and the potential January term. And as an example, some of the issues that came up in the Senate with the January term, also came up in that group, in terms of what degree of staff need to be here, during a January term that might not necessarily be here without one. We have these councils that each have their individually identified mission. So if you have the faculty Council, they are doing educational mission of the university. If you have CSSAC, or MaPSAC, they're doing their mission for the constituents that they serve. Essentially, the kind of routine things that each of the groups need to address would stay with their groups, and then you have the University Council level that would be more be available to rapidly and critically discussed evolving issues.

Q12

Is there space in staff positions and workloads to be able to volunteer for this task force? What if they need supervisor approval and can't get it? In other words, can all staff really participate in these working groups?

Deb Nichols

These are some of the issues that that came up as we were thinking about the leadership team back in the spring, and are issues that aren't fully resolved, but I'm working with senior administrators to discuss this so I will have to come back with a response to that. It would be my hope that those who want to participate are able to, and we'll try to do everything that we

can see that that happens. And going forward, once we think about how we want to do this, the group that's looking at engagement and involvement in the group that's potentially looking at social media tools, that would allow staff who can't participate to have their voices heard.