

Listening Session #2: 16 June 16 2021

Summary Transcript

Deb Nichols

I appreciate you all joining us and for your interest in in sharing your insights on how we can make sure governance across the broader Purdue community more equitable, agile, adaptable, and efficient. The purpose of this session is to hear directly from all of you to learn what your thoughts, concerns, and issues are with respect to shared governance, and to hear your ideas for making it more effective, while acknowledging that we work within the structures and laws of the state of Indiana with regard to decision-making powers. At the end of today's session, we hope to gain a better sense of what you like and dislike currently about shared governance at Purdue what you need or want going forward.

Session Overview: We are recording this session to capture your comments accurately for a summary document. We will not include names or affiliations in the summary document. We're here to listen to you and gather your thoughts, so we won't be speaking or answering any questions tonight. We have four themes, and will have about 10-12 minutes per theme.

First, a **clarification:** During the May 5 listening session, we shared a model of shared governance that arose as a consequence of the pandemic, with leaders from CSSAC, MaPSAC, PSG, PGSG, and the University Senate working closely with Provost Akridge to discuss questions and share concerns. This leadership group was not the same one as the broader Protect Purdue Task Force that senior administration formed. This group was comprised of leaders across campus who represented faculty, both staff groups, and both student groups. We all shared our constituents' concerns and questions and worries, while the Provost had us review multiple policies and procedures to offer feedback. Everyone in this group was able to help shape the broader Protect Purdue efforts, contributing to the ways that promotion and tenure will be modified in light of COVID, to the discussion around childcare challenges and virtual schooling, to remote work guidance, to the long service and teaching hours faculty and staff were putting in, to the degree of burnout everyone was feeling, and how to address compliance concerns. In addition, leaders from the other groups would share terms and queries that we in the Senate leadership would include in each of the surveys we did, generating data with nearly 28,000 responses across the four waves. When we say that the leadership group was a strong and effective model of shared governance, we were talking about *this* group and not the main Protect Purdue COVID Response Team.

I also wanted to share a **definition of shared governance** given the parameters of the state of Indiana. Shared governance is the process by which various constituents—governing boards, senior administration, faculty, and as proposed here, staff and students—contribute to the decision making related to policy procedure and practice. Shared governance does not mean shared decision making. At Purdue, according to the state legislature, decision-making authority is held by the President and the Board of Trustees. So, within these constraints, shared governance would bring together diverse constituents that represent all of us here at Purdue and encourage spirited, but civil, debate and dialogue; provide a direct line of communication to administration and the Board of Trustees; and recognize and accept our role as advisors, and not decision makers.

We have distilled your questions and comments submitted earlier into four broad themes for feedback.

1. What changes to Purdue's shared governance structures would provide more equitable representation for all persons on campus?
2. One proposed model for shared governance involves the creation of a university council with representation from all major constituencies on campus. In this model, a number of councils would be more narrowly defined with regard to whom each council represents. Currently, Purdue has a University Senate dominated by faculty, with some input from two staff organizations (CSSAC, MaPSAC), an undergraduate organization (Purdue Student Government), and a graduate student organization (Purdue Graduate Student Government).
 - What other constituents on campus should have a council (e.g., alumni, faculty lecturers, other staff, community representation)?
 - Are there better ways or other ideas for organizing shared governance at Purdue?
3. What are your biggest concerns with regard to your voice on campus? What would make you feel more comfortable voicing your opinions?
4. If there were one thing you would most like to see happen in this proposed restructuring, what would that be?

Q1: To clarify, one thing not in the definition of shared governance is how it's a term of art that focuses on the teaching and research mission of the university, and the division of labor between the president, the board, and the faculty. It sounds like what you're trying

to do is expand opportunities for various constituent groups to give feedback on things outside of those two areas of primary responsibility, is that right?

Deb Nichols

Yes. The idea behind it is that there are groups on campus who are not adequately represented; the two staff groups don't really have a lot of opportunity to have discussions with senior administration. So within the council level—not the university level, but within the council level—each council would retain its powers and authority, so that the faculty counsel would continue to consult on and discuss all of the things that have been under the purview of the University Senate.

Q2: How would a new shared governance model take into account the relationship with the regional campuses, who currently only have one representative each on the University Senate?

Q3: Perhaps a unification of staff-oriented representative bodies into a single body and a change to governing policy that allows for staff business areas to elect their representatives in a similar manner to faculty areas would be in order? Currently, MaPSAC and CSSAC do membership drives and ask people to volunteer when eligible seats open; they are not nominated from their areas. Volunteers are interviewed and selected by the membership and communication committee and then confirmed by the executive committee. Further, how members are chosen is determined by our governing policy, not by internal operating procedures. It's actually university policy going back to around 1988, and not something the committees themselves can change.

Q4: Could there be considerations for offering some representatives of different cultural groups on campus that encompass graduate and undergraduate students to have a voice, such as the Latino Cultural Center and LGBTQ?

Deb Nichols

In looking at other models, where shared governance is rated more highly than it is here, they tend to have more than 5 leadership councils, or they distribute the positions a little bit differently from Purdue. E.g., there's an NYU model where all the non-tenure-track faculty have a separate council, because the issues that they face are different from the issues of tenured faculty. What are the groups that we might consider should have separate representation?

Q5: Councils such as the Senate, the Student Governments, MaPSAC, CSSAC don't talk to each other much, with the exception of a few joint meetings. One thing might be to not get rid of those specialized councils, but to have a representative from each of those

councils on a larger university-wide council, so that all of that the discussion that comes from those individual groups is fed into a larger group. But if that group doesn't have a chance to interact with the administration, it's all moot point. And so, in the idea of having this university council, then there should be people from the administration on that council as well.

Q6: Purdue does not do focus groups often enough, but it is usually helpful when they do. Not everyone can be in CSSAC, MaPSAC, etc., but they certainly might have an opinion on big issues.

Q7: Do you have any feedback on how our peers in the Big 10 operate?

Deb Nichols

Yes—that will be a question we can address in the FAQ on the website. We have looked at the ways in which they do different models, and we'll be able to give you more information about that. We chose specific models that had the highest shared governance ratings, when we were looking for examples.

Q8: What is the chance that this will make a difference and our voices will be heard?

Q9: Suggestion: there is a lot of technology that we utilize in classrooms to allow students to anonymously post suggestions or comments in class; we could potentially update the Senate meetings or these other governance councils so that people can actually submit suggestions or submit comments anonymously; that might protect or shelter some of the potential concerns that freely expressing opinions could harm people's positions within the university.

Q10: Unless faculty take a leadership role in voicing the concerns of staff, it will be a problem.

Q11: Would it be possible to update the governing policy MaPSCA to explicitly define the group as a representative body? Currently, MaPSAC is explicitly not a representative body for staff. NB: Currently, there is no mechanism for MaPSAC or CSSAC to initiate conversations with administration of their own volition.

Q12: Agreed that faculty must be advocates, because the administration can fire staff but not faculty.

Q13: Exploratory Studies brings in the third largest portion of the incoming class of undergraduates, but at present, they don't have faculty, so it would be beneficial if they had some kind of representation.

Q14: Another good practice is town halls, which can be effective ways to communicate to administration. One example would be the proposed changes to staff paid time off and sick leave several years ago, when the level of participation in the town hall really got the point across. Having one now about SuccessFactors would be great, in fact. If there is safety in numbers, holding town halls and getting faculty to show up can pay off.

Q15: More frequent polling also might help; there may be a sampling issue where the administration makes some decisions without finding out how these decisions will go over with students, faculty, and staff. But the problem is that it can be hard to reach people over email.

Q16: [In response to Q15] In reaching out to students, you could use other platforms like Twitter, or put QR codes around campus with a headline, and students could scan it while they're on campus on their phone. You could do some experimenting and see if that different accessibility points increases response rates.

Q17: Could you explain more about how accountability would function with shared governance? What power would this entity really hold to ensure that decisions include others?

Deb Nichols

Ultimately, the goal is to have all constituents represented and to share in an advisory capacity the issues that we're seeing.

Q18: If trying to remove a staff representative, could a body of faculty, staff, and administration be utilized to review the action to ensure the removal is appropriate?

Q19: It does sound like it is a key requirement to have multiple tenured faculty who would be the speakers on an issue—staff can discuss with the group that felt the faculty would help negotiate.

Q20: Our graduate cohort uses Microsoft Teams or GroupMe to stay updated on events. I don't know if that is something faculty or staff would be interested in having, but it could keep groups updated on major events.

Q21: Does administration want to know or care what staff thinks?

Q22: I absolutely agree that there is insufficient evidence collection from stakeholders regarding shifts in benefits and policies. It seems that data-driven decision making has

been used to justify some changes when the data was very selective or not collected at all. I'm thinking of medical benefits and changes to those benefits.

Q23: Is there a reason this is only an advisory committee and there's no clear power sharing?

Deb Nichols

Yes, there is. The State of Indiana's Legislature gave the decision-making power by law to the Board of Trustees and to President Daniels. Changing that statute would mean lobbying the legislature. But in our current parameters, we can only be advisory.

Q24: Regarding protections against termination, what meager protections we have are completely circumvented by the RIF process. It can be used as a policy to terminate an employee rather than go through the discipline process required.

Q25: The argument that it is state law that there be no decision-making authority is inaccurate. The Board has delegated authority through its bylaws to other groups. If that were true, that the only group who makes decisions is the Board, then the Provost couldn't make decisions. If we don't deal with power relations, then representation isn't enough.

Q26: If MaPSAC can't make a difference in its current capacity, then can it either change the bylaws or start another group that can make a difference?

Conclusion

We'll be announcing the shared governance working group members as well as working with a shared governance consultant to begin drafting a working document for review and feedback, which we will keep on the website. Our next listening session is on June 30, from three to four pm. Prior to that, we will make the summary of this session and the FAQ available. Everyone is encouraged to review the FAQ document and then come back, and we will be releasing another set of issues based on aggregating all of this information together.