

Reflective Essay 3b: An Organization Built Upon Shared Governance

Introduction

This essay will describe the shared governance process in detail and provide three examples of how shared governance has operated on our campus. The first two examples illustrate the manner in which the University Senate, through its committees, has influenced the development of two key initiatives: multi-year budget planning and enrollment management. The third example addresses the role of students in shared governance.

Shared Governance Process [CFR: 3.11 & Q4, Q5]

SDSU has a strong tradition of shared governance through the [University Senate](#). The Board of Trustees assigns decision-making authority to the President of the institution, who, in turn, “shares” that authority with the faculty and other campus constituencies through a system of advice and consent located formally in the Senate. Other relations of formal and informal governance exist, for example with the students through the Associated Students (AS) governing board. The Senate is made up predominantly of tenured/tenure-track faculty, but also includes representatives of the administration, staff, lecturers, and students. It thus incorporates models of both individual representation (each college directly elects a number of senators proportionate to its FTEF) and constituency representation. Our philosophy of governance is collaborative, not adversarial, decision-making. Since 1997, the Senate, for the most part, has succeeded in bringing together campus constituencies to further the work of governance, and has collaborated successfully with the President to develop policy. In fact, from January 1997 through May 2004 the President [approved](#) 86.1% of Senate items, modified 1.16%, did not approve .77%, and took no action on 13.13%.

SDSU is also governed by [collective bargaining agreements](#) between the CSU and its faculty and staff. These bargaining agreements include [faculty](#), [support staff](#), [academic professionals](#), and [physicians](#), [skilled crafts](#) members, and [public safety](#). Thus, shared governance requires a careful negotiation of boundaries between the territory of the Senate and that of the faculty and staff collective bargaining agencies. Similarly, the [University Policy File](#) has been developed with careful attention to the language in our negotiated contracts, especially that of the California Faculty Association (CFA). SDSU has been very successful in developing a good understanding between the CFA and the Senate. For example, the president of the local chapter of CFA is an ex officio, nonvoting member of both the Senate and the Senate Executive Committee.

The institution encourages faculty to participate in governance at all levels. However, for reasons explained in Essay 2b, demographic changes in the faculty may lead to a small “crisis” of leadership in governance. As a generation of faculty leaders retires, we find a gap in mid-level faculty (caused in part by a long period of limited recruitment that only ended in the late 1990s). Thirty-five percent of the faculty (N = 271) has been at SDSU less than five years, which means that they are primarily engaged in demonstrating their competence in teaching and professional growth. Assuring future leadership through recruiting and mentoring junior faculty has become a high priority of the Senate in particular and the campus in general.

Although there is continual negotiation over the areas that are within the purview of the Senate, there is general agreement that the appropriate Senate committees review all academic policies and all practices that concern faculty. Among the major committees and councils through which the faculty exercises its influence are [Academic Policy and Planning](#) (AP&P), [Academic Resources and Planning](#) (AR&P), [Academic Personnel, Diversity, Equity, and Outreach](#), [General Education](#), [Graduate Council](#), [Research Council](#), [Undergraduate Curriculum](#), and [Undergraduate Council](#). Most committees and councils include representatives from each college, including the Imperial Valley Campus, as well as administrators, students, and staff.

Multi-year budget planning [CFRs: 3.5, 4.1, 4.2 & Q3]

The development of SDSU's budget planning process advanced with the expansion of the President's budget advisory committee – the Cabinet Budget Committee, or CBC – into a true embodiment of shared governance. Despite repeated requests throughout the 1980s to add faculty to the CBC, budgetary advice was divided between two committees: the Senate's Committee on Academic Resources and Planning, or AR&P (mostly faculty), and the President's CBC (entirely administration). In 1992, President Thomas B. Day added two faculty and one student to CBC. In 1999, the CBC was expanded further to its current complement of five administrators (one a non-voting chair, except when there is a tie), three faculty members, and one student. Hence, today faculty and students have two opportunities to provide advice and consultation: through AR&P (which also includes a staff representative) and through CBC.

With the arrival of President Stephen L. Weber, a new opportunity arose for consultation that has had a significant impact on budget planning. Out of the [Shared Vision](#) process, the President developed a number of initiatives that required new funding. At the same time, the [Athletics](#) program faced a crucial need for resources in order to meet the requirements of a gender equity settlement between the Trustees of the CSU system and the California National Organization for Women. The faculty also advocated for an accelerated program to rebuild the tenure-track faculty, which had been sharply reduced by the cutbacks of 1992-93. Finding resources for all these priorities required a level of planning in which the university had not previously engaged. AR&P developed the structure of a three-year budget plan that spread out the costs, thus permitting more initiatives to be funded at any one time. A working committee consisting of Senate leaders and the administration's key financial officers crafted a document, the [Compact for University Excellence](#), which outlined this new multi-year budgetary approach. Senate passed the Compact unanimously in May 1997, it was then endorsed by the CBC, and finally accepted by the President. The Compact was a comprehensive program that established the budgetary direction for the university under a new President. The University continued to follow the principles of multi-year budgeting – spreading costs out over successive years rather than concentrating them in one – through successive years, until the budget reductions that began in 2002-03 rendered such planning impossible. However, [Budget Principles](#) developed by the Senate in 2002 are used to guide decision-making during this current financial storm, another example of shared governance.

Through shared governance, we have built a structure that continues to support the financial health of the institution. A good example of this is the role of AR&P in helping to develop and support a strategy for reducing costs during the energy crisis of 2001. In addition, CBC and AR&P have cooperated to provide generally consistent advice to the President on how to enact budget cuts just as they had on budget enhancements. One of the most vexing issues each committee has faced is how to assure adequate course sections to meet instructional demands without severely damaging the infrastructure that supports the mission of the University. To do so, during the 2003-04 budget deliberations, CBC recommended a strategy to support course sections as a matter of highest priority essentially equivalent to institutional costs, which highlights the institution's commitment to meeting student needs. This commitment was further demonstrated by the President's approval, after appropriate consultation, of an \$80/semester increase in the Instructionally Related Activities fee to generate additional revenue for support of Athletics as well as to enable the transfer of state funds from Athletics to Academic Affairs for support of approximately 490 additional course sections.

The campus community has been deeply engaged in and regularly informed about the unfolding drama of the California budget crisis and the University's response to it through a series of [budget updates](#). The Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs also set in motion a series

of planning sessions involving a broad profile of campus constituencies to develop strategies for physical growth, enrollment management, and budget decisions. But, ultimately, the recommendations that go to the President come from the CBC and AR&P, both defined by and a part of our system of shared governance.

Enrollment Management [CFRs: 3.11 & Q5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5]

During the 1980s, over-enrollment of students occurred due to lack of enrollment management authority and tools. The result was large numbers of students attempting to “crash” over enrolled classes, long lines at all student service offices, an increasing length of time to graduation, and a deteriorating reputation in the community. The budget reductions of 1991-92 and 1992-93 temporarily eliminated this problem, along with thousands of students and hundreds of temporary faculty and staff, but in the mid-1990s, enrollment pressures began to mount once again. In the summer of 1996, Stephen L. Weber arrived as the first new president of SDSU in 18 years. He immediately consulted with the chair of University Senate on two initiatives: enrollment management and strategic planning. They agreed that the Senate would take the lead on the first and the President on the second, with mutual consultation on both.

The Senate began its work with the initial goal of producing an enrollment management policy by the end of fall 1996. The need was underscored by the fact that the University was over enrolled by 1,200 students that semester, producing a \$5-6 million shortfall. It soon became evident that, despite meeting every two weeks, one semester would not be long enough to do the job well. The Senate needed to gather data from all constituencies, especially faculty who were concerned that limiting enrollment would have an unequal effect on the admission of underrepresented groups. Before recommending specific enrollment management strategies, such as requesting status as an impacted campus (which permits the establishment of higher admission standards), the Senate aimed to develop overarching [principles](#) that would guide the university through difficult decisions. The task of developing principles, reviewing budgetary implications, and recommending strategies was given to the existing committees on Academic Policy and Planning (AP&P) and Academic Resources and Planning (AR&P) and to a specially created Enrollment Management Task Force. [\[See review process\]](#) These groups worked throughout 1996-97, consulted continually with the administration, and in May 1997, at the last Senate meeting of the academic year, presented first, a recommendation to the President that he request impacted status for the campus and second, a recommendation to add [Principles to Guide Impaction](#) to the University Policy File. After considerable debate, and with some opposition, the Senate approved both, and President Weber subsequently requested and received impacted status for SDSU. [\[See timetable\]](#)

Enrollment management has not been universally accepted either on campus or in the community. Within the Senate, disagreements have taken place over what should be considered policy, and thus the prerogative of the Senate, and what is more properly implementation, belonging to the administration. Cognizant of the controversial status of this issue, the Senate attempted to put into place a number of requirements for review. Each year, the [Division of Academic Affairs](#) provides AP&P with extensive data on how well the enrollment management policies conform to the Principles and AP&P in turn [reports](#) to the Senate. Nevertheless, some controversy continues, especially with the addition of each new strategy for implementing the plan. In 2002, the chair of the Senate, responding in part to concerns of some faculty and students, expanded the enrollment management subcommittee of AP&P (which replaced the separate task force formed in 1996-97) to include a larger representation of faculty and students, which in turn became the campus-based part of a Presidential enrollment management advisory committee that also includes members of the community. There have been spirited debates, both inside and outside of the Senate, over our attempts to control enrollment and some notable failures of communication and understanding, particularly with the prior leadership of Associated

Students. Nonetheless, the majority of faculty endorse the need to manage enrollment in order to provide an excellent education to those students we are able to admit. [See [analysis](#)] The example of enrollment management, like multi-year budget planning, demonstrates how the university is prepared to address large and vexing issues as a campus, and not just as an administration.

The Student Role in Shared Governance [4.1]

The move toward enrollment management tested traditional patterns and policies for student participation in shared governance of the university. The official governing body representing students is [Associated Students](#) (AS), which is also a multi-million dollar corporation that runs several facilities and services at SDSU. During the AY 2001-02, Associated Students expressed concern about the potential impact of enrollment management on the diversity of the student population. The ensuing discussions highlighted two factors that constrain the interaction of students with other components of the university.

First is a difference in style. The AS Council deliberates and acts through resolutions. Issues are introduced directly to the full Council and are debated over successive meetings. On the other hand, deliberations in the Senate start at the committee level. By the time they are introduced to the full Senate, the issues have been well debated and prepared for relatively quick Senate action. Student representatives on the Senate, accustomed to extended debate in a large forum, are greeted with well-processed action items.

The logistics of student representation in Senate committees create a second factor that constrains student participation in governance. Students can have greater voice and opportunity to shape action items when/if they work through the Senate committees. However, Senate committees meet frequently and, some would say, offer a less exciting agenda. It has been difficult to find students who are able to attend the meetings regularly throughout the academic year or even a semester, especially since the demands of weekly meetings of the AS Council and of other AS committees and boards are already substantial.

AS and the Senate are working to address these constraints. In 2002, AS underwent a five-year [review](#) as is required of all auxiliary organizations by Senate Policy. The review was thorough and thoughtful, and from it came a number of recommendations to increase the participation of students in shared governance and to improve communication between AS and the Senate. Independently, AS established a University Affairs Board, headed by a new Vice President, to organize and facilitate student participation in Senate committees and elsewhere in the University governance structure (e.g., the Undergraduate Council). The Senate also recently approved pre-registration for students who serve on Senate committees, allowing students to shape their schedules to attend committee meetings. The Senate is also encouraging committees to establish their schedules early enough to accommodate students and faculty. At the request of AS, a [Shared Governance Task Force](#) was established in spring 2003 to seek improvements in the interaction between the components of the university.

Success stories to date include cooperation between the Senate and AS over efforts to enhance the Library's budget, the recent [Senate approval](#) of an AS initiated proposal to include American Sign Language as one of the options in the university's undergraduate language requirement, and discussions about course syllabi availability to students prior to the beginning of classes. Finally, the establishment of the Campus Fee Advisory Committee has played an important role in ensuring student input in fee changes related to courses, student services, parking, and housing. The Committee is composed of seven students (appointed by AS), three administrators, two faculty and one staff member (representative of Senate) and is the primary, but not exclusive, source of advice regarding increases in campus fees. Considerable change has already taken place that indicates the increased involvement and influence of the student voice on campus issues.

Summary

These two essays illustrate our capacity to achieve our institutional purposes and educational objectives through an organizational structure that facilitates decisions regarding our human, physical, fiscal, and information resources. Given the challenging budgetary situation we currently face, we are both pleased and confident that the structures we have in place will allow us to make wise decisions, aligned with our institutional purposes, about our resources. Finally, the essays provide evidence of our progress in the areas of planning and governance, two issues the WASC 1997 report felt merited attention. As in any learning organization, we are involved with reflection, evidence, and change to ensure that we continue to make improvements in our shared governance processes as well as our planning.