

Executive Summary: Survey of Faculty Opinions about Shared Governance at Columbus State University

The Columbus State University Faculty Senate took steps in Fall Semester 2009 to assess the degree to which faculty are engaged in shared governance at the institution. The Senate established two sub-committees for this task.

The first committee developed a faculty survey using 19 questions from the AAUP shared governance survey and 7 items specifically targeting decisions made at CSU since 2008. These included questions about faculty input in the 2009-12 Strategic Plan, creation of the Provost's position, reorganization of the colleges, online student evaluations of faculty, and restructuring of the Library and CINS. This instrument was distributed to the faculty in November 2009, and 105 completed surveys were returned. The Data Summary, faculty comments, and raw data are attached.

The second committee, the Senate Task Force on Shared Governance, compiled the data and presented it to the Faculty Senate in January 2010. In addition, the Senate sponsored three forums to communicate the results. The forums also provided the Faculty opportunities to comment on the survey and make recommendations to the Senate. Approximately 40 faculty members attended these meetings. In addition to open discussion, attendees also provided written comments anonymously. A summary of the verbal and written comments from these meetings follows.

Timing of the survey

In every forum, attendees noted that the survey results would have been far more critical of the shared governance environment, had the instrument been distributed after

the President and Provost overturned decisions on promotion and tenure. Consequently, faculty expressed concern about the joint decision making process, as highlighted by the survey question: “Does the institution recognize joint responsibility for decision making in staff selection and promotion and the granting of tenure?”

Communication

Faculty criticized the top-down communication model in every forum. One comment: “The administration’s effort to designate CSU as the state’s Fine and Performing Arts campus might be an occasion for a letter to the BOR or even a No Confidence vote. So far, there has been no forum, survey, meeting, vote or other attempt to include faculty in this important decision.” A lack of timely communication about institutional decisions was seen as contributing to confusion and discontent throughout the campus. Faculty expressed concern about the absence of faculty input in the restructuring of the Library in all three forums, echoing the 84% of survey respondents who said that faculty had not been given the opportunity for meaningful input in the changes to that unit.

Compliance with Agreed-Upon Processes

In every forum faculty stated that the administration was overriding or ignoring processes of shared governance, causing faculty to lose confidence in important institutional processes such as tenure and promotion decisions and academic administrative searches.

The recommendations made by forum participants were:

- that the Senate call for a no confidence vote.

- that the Faculty Senate ask for mediation by the BOR to address concerns as an interim step.
- that the Senate ask for outside help from groups such as the CSU Board of Trustees.
- that the president be asked to explain the pressures on him that forced these decisions.

The general view was that this problem cannot be ignored, and that the Faculty Senate should approach the president and provost with the data from the survey so that meaningful change in the respect for and operational processes in a shared governance environment can begin.