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Effective Academic Governance: Five Ingredients for CAOs and Faculty

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Effective Academic Governance

The Results in Brief

ARTICLE SUMMARY

Building a culture of effective shared governance seems like a messy, ill-defined undertaking. However, our literature review and interviews with twenty chief academic officers offer hope to senior administrators and faculty leaders: five "ingredients" of effective academic governance, listed in the table to the right.

Each consists of two or three elements that CAOs and their partners on the faculty can target for improvement. We offer a glimpse of the benefits when these elements are present, and of the costs when they are lacking.

Our recommendations:

- Step back.
- Build consensus.
- Lead by example.
- Build capacity.
- Focus on results.

... include specific suggestions for influencing both "hard" and "soft" governance on campus. We conclude by recommending an assessment of these ingredients on your campus.

	Qualities of Effectiveness	
Ingredients	**Hard governance** Designing structures and processes	**Soft governance** Creating climates and cultures
Trust … in other stakeholders, as well as in governance structures and processes	Expectations for decision-making processes, including roles played by involved stakeholders, are clearly defined.	Enacted practice of governance consistently meets expectations. Stakeholders communicate transparently about governance issues and about enacted practice of decision-making.
Shared sense of purpose … across stakeholders with diverse interests and perspectives	Governance processes, structures are designed to foster interaction across stakeholder groups.	Stakeholders affirm a shared vision for the institution's future.
Understanding the issue at hand …by engaging stakeholders in an inclusive dialog	Governance processes, structures are designed to provide opportunities for interested parties to share their perspectives on issues.	Stakeholders demonstrate respect for diverse perspectives.
Adaptability …of stakeholders' approach to governance, in the interest of improved effectiveness	Governance processes, structures include periodic and credible self-evaluations. Leadership development opportunities for faculty are apparent, frequent, and well-designed.	Stakeholders embrace opportunities to improve governance through reform and professional development. In some situations, flexibility in expectations is tolerated.
Productivity …that signals effectiveness and motivates continued participation	Meeting agendas are thoughtfully crafted. Milestones and deadlines are set and honored. Workload equity is monitored and successes are rewarded.	Stakeholders share responsibility for progress toward specific goals—and credit for the achievements—of governance.

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Effective Academic Governance

Five Ingredients for CAOs and Faculty

by Maya Weilundemo Ott and Kiernan Mathews

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this report emerged after two years of meetings, workshops, and phone calls with the academic leaders participating in the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE). While working with provosts and faculty using the COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey, our research team was asked over and again for advice on improving the vitality of shared governance and developing the quality of faculty leadership.

Digging deeper, we realized that COACHE surveys only indirectly revealed whether faculty and administrators get along when working on the institution. Our focus on what can be done to improve faculty circumstances had missed the prior question: is there even any institutional capacity to get that work started?

So, early in 2014, we set out to develop a new survey module to shed light on the faculty-administration relationship in sharing governance. We invited chief academic officers to share their personal perspectives on how a faculty survey might diagnose the aspects of shared governance necessary for academic leaders to move their institutions forward.

Ultimately, twenty chief academic officers were interviewed. They were serving a diverse sample of four-year colleges and universities spanning every geographic region of the United States. These included baccalaureate, master's, and research institutions with enrollments ranging from just over 1,000 students to nearly 30,000. In each category, public and private non-profit institutions were represented.

We asked what provosts expect of shared governance, and what they think faculty at their institutions expect from it. We also asked them to describe the hallmarks, or "evidence," that shared governance really is working. The interviews covered effective or ineffective governance structures and criteria for determining who plays what role in decision making. Given an "if you could do anything" scenario, provosts offered suggestions for improving shared governance.

Interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using software that supports qualitative data analysis. What materialized were five aspects, or "ingredients," of effective shared governance:

- Trust
- Shared sense of purpose
- Understanding the issue at hand
- Adaptability
- Productivity

We decided not to call these "essential ingredients," because an institution could certainly survive with a deficiency in one or more of them. However, based on our review of the literature and on these interviews, we believe that a healthy balance of all these ingredients will create the conditions for a more collaborative relationship between faculty and administrators.

A limitation of this report is its focus on the working relationships between faculty and administrators; boards were intentionally excluded from the scope of this research. In addition, the intention was to explore these issues from the perspective of senior administrative leadership, so current faculty were not consulted. The faculty perspective has been solicited by COACHE's new "Shared

Governance" survey module, and the results will reveal faculty's attitudes about exemplary campuses and promising governance practices. Those data will also illuminate which "ingredients" best explain faculty's overall sense of satisfaction with their institutions as places to work.

This report is intended primarily for chief academic officers and their senior staff; and for leaders among faculty in their senates, councils, unions, and committees. Presidents and boards could take from its pages a newfound respect for the academic leaders—administrator and professor alike—who get good work done in a shared governance environment.

By disaggregating the faculty-administrative relationship beyond merely "heaven" or "hell," this report could serve as a checklist for faculty and administrators. Each point should provoke a constructive dialog among stakeholders about what is necessary to overcome their institutions' challenges, from the day-to-day to the existential.

FIVE INGREDIENTS OF SHARED GOVERNANCE

The provosts we interviewed expressed nuanced perspectives on shared governance, reflecting their rich professional experience. Some interviewees had served the same institution, in a variety of roles, for decades. Because they had personally participated in the same system of governance both as faculty members and as administrators, they appreciated subtle differences in how faculty and administrators perceive governance. Other interviewees' careers spanned multiple institutions with different approaches to governance, and their perspectives reflected thoughtful consideration of the relative merits and drawbacks of each approach.

Interviewees' perspectives on effective governance were as diverse as their backgrounds. Some provosts articulated specific principles that guide their personal engagement with governance, while others expressed more intuitive understandings of effectiveness. As one provost said, "I know it when I see it." In all cases, interviewees illustrated their perspectives with examples of effective—and ineffective—governance, drawn from their personal experiences and observations. What emerged from this landscape of ideas and examples was a set of five ingredients that contribute to effective governance: trust, shared sense of purpose, understanding the issue at hand, adaptability, and productivity. No single interviewee explicitly identified all five of these ingredients, which instead represent the collective wisdom of these diverse academic leaders.

Trust

Provosts described trust as "the heart" of shared governance, asserting that faculty and administrators "have to trust each other" in order to share decision making authority successfully. They observed that trust fosters institutional progress—and resilience, in times of crisis—because the people involved in governance deliberate issues in good faith and "empower each other to make decisions." Interviewees also understood that trust cannot be taken for granted: it must be earned over time and is easily "broken." They described breaches that triggered or deepened institutional crises, creating "a divide" that was "antithetical" to collaborative decision making. According to one provost, "If you don't trust each other, then I don't see how it can really work."

> "I think faculty expect a voice, that their voice be heard. I think that they expect to be treated like adults and be given information, not treated like children and have reasons withheld. I think that they expect to be respected in this area of governance and decision making."

The repeated references to trust raise two questions: What exactly does trust mean to provosts, in the context of shared governance? And what can be done to build and maintain trust? Interviewees

seemed to understand trust in very practical terms, often describing trust and distrust as functions of how well decision making processes meet the expectations of the community. Altogether, they identified three factors that promote trust: clearly defined expectations for shared governance, governance practices that consistently meet the community's expectations, and a continuous commitment to transparency.

Clearly defined expectations for governance

"To get at trust," one provost advised, "you have to ask: what are people's expectations going in?" Interviewees described many institutions that explored this question and then translated their communities' expectations into "very spelled-out" guidelines for governance—typically codified in faculty handbooks, union contracts, or bylaws—that detail decision-making processes and articulate the specific roles and responsibilities of everyone involved. The best examples also clearly define the boundaries of decision-making authority, specifying where the "prerogatives" are "truly faculty" and where "ultimately the administrative voice is the decisive one." Provosts saw "an enormous amount" of value in these guidelines, which provide an indispensable reference for navigating the everyday business of governance and for holding decision makers accountable to their communities' expectations.

At other institutions, guidelines for governance are underspecified or even nonexistent. As one provost admitted, "I haven't found anything in writing." According to interviewees, serious difficulties result from confusion about "who owns what" in terms of decision making authority. Without a clearly defined "jurisdiction," some faculty members expect to "be involved in everything," while others interpret the lack of a specified role as a sign that faculty are powerless. Similarly, administrators expecting a faster "pace of change" may assume broad decision making authority, provoking conflicts with faculty—and other administrators—who expect more deliberation and collaboration. Provosts cautioned that institutions should beware power imbalances that go "too far" toward faculty or toward administrators: "It needs to be shared governance, not just one side or the other running the university."

Practices that consistently meet community expectations

Provosts argued that decision makers earn trust when governance practices follow the guidelines established by their communities. People tend to accept decisions, even controversial ones, when they believe decision makers "played by the rules." According to one interviewee, "The confrontational issues are less about what decisions were made than about how they were made." In particular, provosts found that relations between administrators and faculty are more trusting, and less antagonistic, when these groups demonstrate respect for each other's delegated roles and authority. Provosts noticed that, when faculty feel confident that administrators will not "usurp the faculty's role" in governance, they become more willing "to let go of some things" and allow administrators "to take some of the administrative burden off of faculty, so they can do what they want: research, teaching, and service."

> "The expectation for shared governance is to give everybody a say. The reality is that giving everybody a say means tension, in different needs and priorities. It's both its greatest asset and its downfall."

Provosts acknowledged, however, that community members at some institutions feel that the integrity of shared governance has been compromised because decision making practices routinely violate their expectations. Too often, provosts said, those involved in governance overstep the defined limits of their roles. They described governing bodies that "voted on policies that weren't their authority" and disruptive individuals who "raised such a stink" that decision making processes were changed "at

the last minute." These types of "political and dysfunctional" actions breach community expectations regarding the sharing of decision making authority and can raise concerns that "a certain group of people has taken over running the institution." According to interviewees, people often react defensively when they feel that their roles in governance have been "trounced" and can become ensnared in efforts to re-claim their "turf."

A continuous commitment to transparency

Provosts advised that institutional cultures should encourage "as much transparency as possible," arguing that governance produces better outcomes when communities engage in "open, honest dialog" about the issues and are informed about their institutions' "inner workings." Furthermore, people involved in decision making garner trust when they work "out in the open, transparently and authentically." Transparency from institutional leaders is particularly valuable, because their behavior often sets the tone. Provosts described administrators who help their communities anticipate and overcome crises by communicating early about "what the dilemma might be, what the alternatives appear to be, and what decision might be forthcoming and why." At one institution, the chief financial officer periodically briefs faculty about the budget "so they would understand what was at stake" as administrators wrestle with tough financial decisions.

> "In administration you get thicker skin every day, but you keep plugging away at being open. I can understand why some of my peers shut their doors and don't let faculty in, stop communicating, because it can be so negative, and you'll just be digging yourself a hole. As a leader, I have to force myself out that door and say, 'Here I am again!'"

Underscoring the value of transparency, provosts recalled several serious incidents in which someone withheld or misrepresented crucial information, leading to flawed decision making that, in at least one case, precipitated a crisis. These instances also roused suspicion about what motivated the transgressors, and entire campuses became distracted by troubling questions like, "What are you hiding?" Rumors swirled about "a hidden agenda" or "an evil subtext." Administrators, in particular, were accused of "hiding behind the authority of their positions." In some cases, information was eventually shared, but some people felt it was shared too late and wondered, "Why are we only hearing about this now?" According to provosts, all of these incidents contributed to "an atmosphere of complete mistrust" that only dissipated after years of effort directed at healing campus communities.

Shared sense of purpose

Tension seems to be inevitable in shared governance, as constituencies with "different needs and priorities" come together to make decisions with broad implications. That tension can be the "downfall" of governance if decision makers are "singularly focused" on aggressively protecting their own self-interest. However, provosts found that many institutional communities are able to resolve tension constructively by cultivating "a common understanding of where we're going" that incorporates diverse interests, but also transcends them. At these institutions, people involved in governance seem more willing to compromise, deferring to the "collective good," and the climate around governance is more cooperative. According to one provost, decision makers with a shared sense of purpose "play well with others."

Although "consensus can be hard to find" and "ongoing collaboration takes work," provosts argued that cultivating a shared sense of purpose is worthwhile, because "you can't be successful if you don't have people believing in what you do." Interviewees described two elements that contribute to a shared sense of purpose: a shared vision for the future of the institution and governance practices that foster relationships across stakeholder groups.

Shared vision for the future of the institution

According to interviewees, the diverse constituencies at some institutions are united by a shared vision for their institution's future. Through a collaborative process, they gained an understanding of how their diverse interests could be aligned toward "common priorities." According to provosts, this type of process fosters a shift in perspective, helping people look beyond their own interests to "see issues in a broader way, in terms of institutional impact." People also seem more willing to compromise, to make decisions for "the overall benefit" that might "not be the best thing they can do for their own in the short term." Although having a shared vision does not ensure that there are "never any disagreements," provosts found that, when governance grapples with thorny issues, it can be helpful to remind everyone "where we've agreed we're trying to go."

In the absence of a common set of priorities, shared governance can become a contentious arena in which groups "compete with each other" to protect their unique interests, which "don't always align." This kind of conflict-driven decision making process too often neglects broader institutional interests, resulting in short-sighted decisions that cannot feasibly be implemented or that violate institutional policies or federal law. Furthermore, provosts observed that many people opt out of governance if the climate seems hostile, because they do not "buy in to what's going on."

Practices that foster relationships across groups

At some institutions, governance practices have been deliberately designed to promote "a lot of interaction" across stakeholder groups, to foster a "dialog around the institution," and to cultivate a "collaborative atmosphere." Leaders of these institutions pay careful attention to the composition of governing bodies, to ensure they represent "every part of the community," including "the academic side, the nonacademic side, the maintenance people." They also schedule frequent events to "pull these groups together," creating opportunities for colleagues to "sit at the table together," both to deliberate issues and to socialize. Interviewees believed that these interactions foster understanding across stakeholder groups, broaden individuals' perspectives on issues, and encourage collaboration, as people seem eager to "get to know their colleagues and work with them to achieve a specific goal."

At other institutions, governance practices actually reinforce boundaries between stakeholder groups. Groups participate in separate and "extremely different" governing bodies, so they "see themselves as representing one professional class or the other." Because people at these institutions operate within "silos with their own cultures and biases and viewpoints" and rarely interact with colleagues from other "silos," their perspectives on issues are relatively limited, and they often struggle to collaborate. Some provosts felt compelled to serve as intermediaries, engaging in an inefficient and frustrating "ping-pong process" of "trying to explain" each group's perspective to the other. Describing this as "the stuff we have to do as administrators," one interviewee nevertheless regretted the inefficiency: "it would save time to bring everyone to the table."

Understanding the issue at hand

The issues addressed by shared governance are rarely straightforward. Provosts argued that the best decisions are based on a thorough understanding of issues' complexity that accounts for "a lot of different points of view." They advised that institutional decision makers should treat the diverse perspectives within their communities as their "greatest asset" and embrace an inclusive approach to governance that welcomes broad participation as issues are deliberated. However, interviewees conceded that, at some institutions, decisions are often based on a limited understanding of the issues, because their governance practices effectively exclude some community members from contributing their perspectives.

Although including diverse perspectives in governance can be time-intensive, provosts contended that the "health of the institution" depends on well-informed decision making. They described

two elements that contribute to a fuller understanding of the issues: a culture that values diverse perspectives and governance practices that invite broad participation.

Demonstrated respect for diverse perspectives

"Listening to varied opinions is essential" to understanding complicated issues, and interviewees insisted that "all ideas are of value," including those that are unpopular or controversial. "You're surrounded by a lot of smart people," one interviewee reasoned, "so why shouldn't you crowdsource that intelligence?" At the same time, provosts realized that "people need to feel free to express their thoughts and opinions without fear of reprisal." They described many institutions where the culture promotes "a free exchange of ideas": community members engage in a "collegial dialog," they maintain a "positive tone," and "respect is demonstrated on all sides." These institutions benefit from candid conversations about issues and ensure that "everyone who is supposed to have a voice" in governance "actually has a voice."

> "As an administrator you operate under incomplete information, and there's a time constraint. So, the senate can bring in a lot of points of view that the administration is myopic to, things you don't think about under time constraints and don't carry out to the logical conclusion."

Unfortunately, provosts admitted that at some institutions they have seen people with perspectives outside the mainstream be treated with ambivalence—or worse. They described some institutional leaders who value diverse perspectives as an "idea, but not always in practice," and other, more extreme cases of leaders who effectively silence dissenting viewpoints by giving people "reason to be fearful of reprisal." At these institutions, decisions are often short-sighted because they are based on a "myopic" understanding of the issues. Furthermore, decisions seem to "come from on high," leading to "widespread feelings of voicelessness." If people feel their perspectives are being unjustly disregarded, provosts observed, they sometimes resort to "oppositional behaviors," finding ways to "slow down" governance until their perspectives on the issues are taken seriously.

Practices that invite broad participation

Interviewees described several institutions where governance practices ensure that "all perspectives have an opportunity to get on the table and be discussed." Rather than expecting ideas to somehow "flow across the campus," these institutions designed "infrastructure" that enables people to weigh in on "decisions that affect them." Provosts emphasized that governing bodies at these institutions are carefully monitored, to ensure adequate representation of the diverse interests and perspectives on their campuses. Some institutions also created "deliberative spaces," including regularly scheduled community meetings and "affinity groups," as avenues for community members to become directly involved in governance. One institution redesigned its schedule to reserve a "common hour" for these types of events. Encouraging broad participation not only leads to better understanding of the issues, it also lends "credibility" to the processes and outcomes of governance.

At other institutions, governance practices effectively—albeit often unintentionally—exclude people from sharing their perspectives on issues and, by extension, limit the understanding of decision makers. Interviewees were particularly concerned about governing bodies that inadequately represent "vulnerable" or "marginalized" groups, including the "troubling" under-representation of junior faculty, and contingent faculty who sometimes are "not represented at all." In one instance, faculty from one academic program were unable to attend governance events because they were routinely scheduled at a time when those faculty were also expected to supervise students in required program

activities. This scheduling conflict "forced" these faculty to "do your job, or have a voice." Provosts worried that people who are excluded from governance feel "alienated," as if "their opinions don't count"—which can lead to "very messy" situations. At one institution, a group of faculty who felt misrepresented went directly to the provost to "get themselves heard," creating confusion about who represented the "voice of the faculty."

Adaptability

Shared governance does not happen in a vacuum. Many institutions change and, even for those institutions that stay the same, the landscape of higher education changes around them. Provosts argued that there is no single most effective approach to governance; instead, there is an approach that works best at a specific institution, in a specific historical context, and even in response to the demands of a specific decision making situation. They observed that some institutions embrace an adaptable approach to governance, engaging in an ongoing process of "figuring out what works," while other institutions seem wedded to the status quo, regardless of its effectiveness.

Interviewees understood that, in some cases, institutions may not focus on improving governance because their "house is on fire" with other, seemingly more urgent, issues. They argued, however, that effective governance is an invaluable tool for preventing and dealing with those kinds of issues. "A lot of what we need to do as a campus is fundamentally impossible," one provost said, "unless we address the problems with shared governance." Interviewees described two elements that foster adaptability: a developmental approach to leadership and governance and allowances for flexibility.

Developmental approaches to leadership and governance

Some institutions approach governance with "an eye towards the future," scrutinizing the effectiveness of the status quo and embracing opportunities for improvement. These institutions engage in ongoing conversations about governance, periodically punctuated by formal evaluations. If they identify problems, they seize the opportunity to "start fresh," exploring alternative approaches and experimenting with change, without expecting immediate or perfect results. As one provost readily admitted, "We're still working on it. There are still kinks." Professional development—primarily targeting faculty, but often including administrators, too—is common at these institutions, because "you need to learn to work in a shared governance environment." Provosts described professional development as a long-term investment that "is good for individuals and good for the institution": it improves individuals' capacity "to wisely take on duties" and "generates the next wave of leaders."

> "I believe that most schools just assume that this is one of those things you just magically know."

For other institutions, particularly those confronting serious challenges like budget cuts or "compliance issues," improving governance can be a relatively low priority. As one provost explained, "When there's a hole in the ceiling, you keep the rain out." Interviewees argued, however, that ineffective governance often contributes to institutional crises, because the status quo is "incapable of dealing with the challenges we face." They described "carelessly designed" decision making processes that "take months" and irrational, outdated committee structures that "consume enormous amounts of faculty time." Unfortunately, these kinds of issues often persist, unaddressed, because institutional cultures resist change, and people "can't see a way of doing something different." At some institutions, offering professional development related to governance is viewed as futile, because "faculty are busy people" who "don't want to go to a training for a committee they'll only be on for two years."

Allowances for flexibility

According to provosts, even the most thoughtfully designed system of governance has limits and may

prove ineffective under certain conditions, especially depending on "the severity of the decision" and "how quickly the decision needs to be made." They described institutional leaders who respectfully negotiate with their communities, asking them to tolerate occasional flexibility in their approach to governance, while also looking "to honor" the communities' expectations, even if not "in the purest form." One provost explained, "If there's time for broad-based input, then let's do it, but if not, let's involve as many as we can." Interviewees emphasized that these leaders appreciate their communities' flexibility and request it only when necessary. "Just because you have the authority," one provost said, that "doesn't mean you can do it all the time."

> "In general I think that people who are affected by the decision need to be involved in the decision making. That's not always possible in the purest form—but you can at least make an attempt to keep people aware of what the dilemma might be, what the alternatives appear to be, and keep them apprised of what decision might be forthcoming and why."

In contrast, other institutions have "very rule-bound" cultures. There, every decision making situation is approached in the same way, and any attempt to work outside of that status quo is treated as "a big deal." These institutions "get into corners sometimes," particularly when governance-as-usual moves too slowly to meet critical deadlines. Provosts argued that institutional leaders "can't let all decisions be made" through the same time-intensive processes "without occasionally shutting down the college." Because governance is "not nimble," leaders "just have to act," making "quick strategic decisions" to protect institutional interests. At the same time, unilateral actions by leaders, however well-intentioned, can "wreak havoc" on trust because they violate community expectations for governance; they are particularly "corrosive" in communities that expect strict adherence to the status quo.

Productivity

Time and again, provosts used one word to describe how they know that governance is effective: "change." Put simply, "Shared governance works when things get done." They described many institutions with well-managed governance practices that foster productivity, enabling those involved in governance to accomplish "something significant" and contribute to "transformation on our campus." Provosts observed that people are more motivated to participate in governance when they see evidence that their time and effort will lead to meaningful results. On the other hand, provosts also described institutions where governance is not much "more than theater," leading many people to question whether participation is worthwhile.

Managing the work of governance requires time and attention—particularly on the part of institutional leaders—but provosts described this as a worthy investment, because every institution "is as good as it is because of shared governance." Interviewees described two elements that foster productivity: governance practices focused on results and a culture of joint responsibility.

Governance practices focused on results

At some institutions, governance practices, by design, promote observable progress toward specific goals. Administrators and faculty a these institutions regularly identify concrete "goals we're after" and then craft an agenda for governance, mapping out milestones and action steps toward each goal, to make sure "the work is clearly defined." The use of meetings at these institutions is "deliberate" and "strategic," as meetings are viewed as opportunities "to get something accomplished or to vote on something important." These institutions achieve results, provosts said, but they also—importantly—celebrate results. Institutional leaders publicly highlight "success stories" as evidence that "we're

effectively working together" and "concretely things are happening that we said we would do." As one provost said, celebrating the accomplishments of effective governance "keeps the momentum going in a positive way."

> "Goodwill and mutual understanding are not always enough."

At other institutions, the goals of governance are more ambiguous and the practices are less focused on delivering results. Interviewees argued that having a hands-off approach to managing the work of governance "just doesn't work": people spend "a huge amount of unproductive time," with "no outcomes." Without a clear agenda, a governing body could deliberate an issue "for a decade and never get to a decision point." Interviewees expressed frustration about the inefficient use of meetings, which sometimes convene "even if there isn't any business." They observed that many faculty opt out of governance at these institutions, because "there's no 'so what?'" One provost was particularly candid: "If that time isn't used productively, then people stop showing up. I certainly did."

Joint responsibility through equity and reward

Governance "depends on a tremendous amount of work" that can be accomplished most efficiently and effectively when many people contribute their share of time and effort. Provosts described institutions with a culture of "shared responsibility" for governance, and they argued that institutional leaders play a critical role in cultivating that culture. At these institutions, leaders ensure that the work of governance is equitably distributed and that everyone is "held accountable" for their share. Furthermore, leaders motivate participation in governance by "rewarding contributions to service" and by "just spending a lot of time reminding people why we need to do this." These institutions more fully benefit from the human capital available on their campuses and, as a result, have "more power" to enact change.

Elsewhere, the work of governance is distributed inequitably, with a small number of people attempting to carry "the burden of service" for their entire campuses. These institutions often have "no way to document" participation in governance, so people are not held accountable and nobody gets "credit" for their contributions. As a consequence, these institutions suffer from a widespread "lack of participation" that limits the capacity of governance. As one provost said simply, "A few can't do it all." Interviewees also observed that the few who do participate in governance at these institutions are often held solely responsible for its effectiveness, resulting in a demoralizing "blame game" that exacerbates feelings of service "fatigue." And, according to one provost, "Administrators get the first blame."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, provosts' descriptions of effective governance emphasized the relative importance of "soft" governance—aspects of institutional culture and climate—compared to "hard" governance—decision making processes and structures (Birnbaum, 2004). However, interviewees suggested that both hard and soft governance are critical to effectiveness and, when thoughtfully integrated, can be mutually reinforcing: hard governance can codify cultural values, drive cultural change, and provide a safety net if soft governance is tested by unexpected challenges.

Even so, provosts' emphasis on soft governance stands in contrast to "common wisdom" in the field, as institutional leaders often focus on changes in hard governance, such as restructuring governing bodies or modifying decision making processes, as strategies for improving effectiveness (Kezar, 2004, p. 35). However, that focus on hard governance may be more practical than philosophical: changing hard governance is "administratively feasible," whereas "no one knows how to go about altering soft governance" (Birnbaum, 2004, p. 10).

Furthermore, depending on their missions and histories, institutions face "uniquely different challenges" (Schwartz et al., 2009, p. 20) and, therefore, will approach governance differently (National Commission on College and University Board

Governance [NCCUBG], 2014). Interviewees themselves acknowledged that no simple formula for effective shared governance exists because "every institution has a different way of doing it." Academic leaders are advised to convene their community to discuss their own organizational circumstances before embracing another institution's "best practice."

With that caveat, the CAOs who participated in this study recommended a variety of strategies for improving effectiveness, targeting elements of both hard and soft governance. Drawn from their experiences, these provosts' suggestions are further supported by scholarly literature about shared governance.

Step back.

Learn more about the people involved in—and affected by—governance on your campus, including what they think of existing governance practices.

Get reacquainted with the diverse constituencies on your campus. Provosts advocated for an inclusive approach to governance that "involves people carefully in decision making when the decision affects them." They argued that leaders should learn to anticipate when specific groups or individuals will want their voices heard—and when they can make particularly valuable contributions to governance—by seeking a fresh understanding of their perspectives, interests, and expertise. Scholars further encourage leaders to become sensitive to the diversity of perspectives within groups, paying particular attention to those who may feel marginalized (Birnbaum, 2004; NCCUGB, 2014; Pope, 2004).

Start a conversation about the effectiveness of the status quo. Many provosts expressed optimism about the future of shared governance because of ongoing discussions about its effectiveness that they viewed as essential to the long-term health of their institutions. The literature also suggests—as provosts did—the value of formal evaluations that use broad-based input to identify specific areas for improvement (Bahls, 2014a, 2014b; NCCUGB, 2014). Interviewees described the "very interesting and generative" process of identifying opportunities to improve governance, exploring alternative approaches used by other institutions—as well as homegrown models of "innovative" practices used by governing bodies and academic units within their own institutions—and experimenting with change.

> "Faculty governance moves slowly and deliberately, which is why it tends to make good decisions."

Build consensus.

Lead a collaborative process to develop a shared vision for your institution's future and a shared sense of how governance should work to make that vision a reality.

Cultivate a shared vision for the future of your institution. The literature suggests that governance is more effective when diverse campus constituencies feel that their interests are aligned toward a set of shared priorities (Bahls, 2014a, 2014b). The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (2006) describes this as a "partnership purposefully devoted to a well-defined, broadly affirmed institutional vision" (p. 9). Likewise, interviewees said that developing "a common understanding of where we're going" encourages decision makers to "rally around common goals" rather than be divided by their self-interests. Provosts specifically identified strategic planning as an opportunity to engage diverse stakeholders in developing a shared vision.

Clarify expectations for governance. According to the literature, governance is more effective when those involved share a common understanding of how decisions will be made (Bahls, 2014b; NCCUGB, 2014; Olson, 2009; Schwartz, Skinner, & Bowen, 2009). Likewise, provosts emphasized the value of examining existing expectations regarding governance, identifying ambiguities or disagreements, and working collaboratively to develop a shared set

of well-defined expectations. At their institutions, the need—and opportunity—to clarify expectations regarding governance emerged from broader institutional processes, such as accreditation, updating faculty handbooks, or evaluations of governance. To raise awareness about expectations and ensure that everyone "knows their responsibilities," interviewees argued that institutions should offer orientation and ongoing professional development, advice that is echoed in the literature (NCCUGB, 2014; Schwartz et al., 2009).

Lead by example.

Set the tone for governance by modelling transparency, personal accountability, and respect.

Model transparency by communicating openly. Bahls (2014b) writes that, "at its best," shared governance "is based on a culture of open communication" (p. 29). Provosts argued that leaders should communicate early and openly about issues they see on the horizon, so colleagues will feel well-informed and trust that there was "no attempt to keep this secret or hidden." As one interviewee said, "Put it out there. Full disclosure." Provosts found it especially helpful to meet frequently—and one-on-one—with other campus leaders, particularly faculty leaders and union representatives, to maintain "an ongoing dialog" about "what we see coming down the road." They also advised that leaders should be open and honest about the rationale for their decisions, particularly unpopular ones: explain that "you thought about it, and heard faculty, and respectfully disagree due to these reasons."

Model accountability for your role in governance. Scholars argue that governance is more effective when decision making practices consistently match the community's expectations (Birnbaum, 2004; Kezar, 2004; NCCUGB, 2014). According to provosts, institutional leaders can model accountability to their communities' expectations by consistently meeting—and not overstepping—their roles in governance. They advised leaders to respect the boundaries of their authority, by acknowledging when a decision is "not my call," and to accept personal responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. "I can understand why some of my peers shut their doors, because [feedback] can be so negative," one provost said, "but you'll just be digging yourself a hole. As a leader, I have to force myself out that door and say, 'Here I am.'"

Demonstrate respect for and openness to diverse perspectives. In the words of one provost, "Personalities do matter." Interviewees observed that "how we engage" as leaders can set a collegial, respectful tone for the entire campus community, and scholars agree that leaders' interpersonal styles influence the climate around governance (Kezar, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2009). Provosts found that people feel respectfully included in governance when they "know that their input has been heard." They said that leaders can demonstrate respect for diverse perspectives by "actively listening" with an open mind, setting aside their own "preconceived notions" and genuinely considering new ideas.

Build capacity.

Invigorate governance by developing human—and social—capital.

> "You have to make it more than theater."

Build human capital by investing in professional development. The work of governance is "often unfamiliar to those who participate" (Schwartz et al., 2009, p. 11). According to provosts, individuals' capacity to contribute effectively to governance depends on a complex set of skills, including expressing their own perspectives, active listening, managing disagreements, working in teams, and leading strategic meetings. While "it may seem obvious that organizations whose primary focus is learning need to be places of rich and pervasive learning for everyone in the organization," too many colleges fall short on living a growth mindset every day (Boudett & City, 2014, p. 13). Provosts argued that leaders should identify and address professional development needs on their campuses, because enhancing individuals' skills

will also build their institutions' internal leadership capacity. Scholars agree that developing a network of leaders at all levels within an institution—and, in particular, cultivating the leadership potential of faculty members—contributes to more effective governance (Bahls, 2014a, 2014b; Kezar, 2004; NCCUGB, 2014). Provosts emphasized that leadership development takes many forms, including thoughtfully delegating responsibilities and creating new leadership opportunities that reflect individuals' strengths.

Enrich the network of relationships on your campus. Provosts advocated for governance practices that bring together members of different stakeholder groups—providing frequent opportunities for them to get to know each other and work together to achieve shared goals—as a strategy for breaking down perceived boundaries between groups. Like interviewees, scholars argue that these experiences foster understanding between groups and broaden people's perspectives on governance issues (Bahls, 2014b; Kezar, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2009). Provosts said that leaders can promote interaction across groups by ensuring that governing bodies include representatives from diverse groups, by recognizing opportunities for groups to meaningfully collaborate, and by planning social events that foster networking.

Facilitate an inclusive dialog about governance issues. Provosts argued that governance practices should create opportunities for decision makers to hear from people with diverse perspectives, to promote fuller understanding of complex issues. "A major area of conversation" at some institutions concerns the composition of governing bodies, to ensure they adequately represent the diversity of perspectives on their campuses. Provosts—and scholars—also emphasized that communication about governance issues should effectively engage all campus audiences (Olson, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2009) and that leaders should encourage broad participation by creating open forums for people to share their views (Bahls, 2014b; Kezar, 2004; Pope, 2004). As leaders, one interviewee said, "We work very hard at ongoing communication."

Focus on results.

Build momentum by crafting a goal-oriented agenda for governance, negotiating a flexible approach to decision making, and celebrating progress.

Map out an agenda for governance. Provosts observed that productivity depends on having "real clarity at the beginning" regarding the goals of governance and the work required to reach those goals. They argued that "carefully blocking out the work along a timeline" helps everyone focus their efforts and creates opportunities to recognize incremental progress toward longer-term goals. Boudett and City (2014) argue that "in most situations… the important question is not 'Do we have enough time?' but 'Are we making the best use of the time we already have?'" (p. 10). For these reasons, interviewees advised setting an agenda for governance: identifying specific goals, mapping out milestones toward each goal, and setting deadlines. One provost described this as the "syllabus" for governance, created by "working backwards" from goals. According to Kezar (2004), campus leaders who "provide a sense of direction and priorities" foster more effective governance (p. 41).

> "It's like setting up a syllabus: by the end of the semester, everyone is going to be able to do X, so how do we set up the syllabus to get there in a timely way?"

Negotiate a flexible approach to unusual decision making situations. Provosts described a tension between meeting community expectations regarding governance and responding effectively to unusual decision making situations, particularly those demanding "quick strategic decisions." They advised leaders to negotiate a flexible approach to decision making—only in truly unusual situations—by communicating early about the emerging situation, explaining why the typical approach might be ineffective in this case, and suggesting

an alternative approach that honors established expectations as much as possible. One interviewee described conversations with the faculty senate that help clarify "what we mean by shared governance" in a given "decision making moment." Some institutions may find it helpful to establish decision criteria, specifying the conditions under which the typical approach to governance should be overruled. Kezar (2004) describes flexibility as critical to effective governance, arguing that institutions "must be able to alter structures and processes to adapt to circumstances" (p. 39).

Celebrate the achievements of governance and share credit. Interviewees argued that campus leaders should seize opportunities to publicly recognize the accomplishments of shared governance. Calling attention to observable progress achieved through governance provides evidence that "it works": the results are there "for everyone to see." Provosts also advised that leaders should find ways to demonstrate appreciation for participants whose time and effort made those achievements possible, "to show that we value and reward their contributions to service." According to scholars, leaders can motivate participation in governance by highlighting successes and rewarding those who contribute (Bahls, 2014a, 2014b; Kezar, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2009).

CONCLUSION

Building on the findings reported here, the Collaborative has designed a survey module to measure, from the perspective of faculty, the degree to which these five ingredients are evident in institutional governance practices. This next phase of our study is an opportunity for faculty to check the authenticity of the findings that emerged from interviews with provosts.

We invite all colleges and universities to enroll to assess the governance culture—and other dimensions of the faculty experience—at their institutions. COACHE research partners will learn from a comparative dataset and exemplary practices that draw together results from a wide range of participating institutions.

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