

Assessing the Senate

Critical Issues Considered

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Based on a national study of 750 4-year institutions, this study assesses the current state of senates and identifies factors that contribute to senate effectiveness. Findings show that although cultural elements of campus governance are positive, faculty are dissatisfied with the quality of their involvement in decision making. Regression analyses show that high levels of faculty involvement in the senate and influence in particular areas of decision making are significant predictors of senate effectiveness. Based on the findings, the study raises questions aimed at advancing the study and practice of institutional governance with particular attention to the role of faculty senates.

Keywords: *governance; faculty senates; organization; higher education*

Faculty senates remain the means by which most faculty participate in governance. More than 90% of 4-year colleges and universities have a faculty senate or some variation of a faculty governing body (Gilmour, 1991). Some critics argue that senates inhibit responsive decision making (Scott, 1996; Strohm, 1981). Other scholars argue that faculty involvement in governance is important for institutional effectiveness (Burgan, 1998; Gerber et al., 1997). If faculty involvement in decision making significantly affects governance, then an examination of faculty senates is warranted.

Utilizing a national data set with 763 institutions, I examine issues that affect senate involvement in institutional governance. The issue of how to involve faculty senates in governance more effectively is the intended goal. My objective for this study is to consider what cultural and functional elements most significantly affect the performance of faculty senates. Faculty senates are considered

Author's Note: *The author would like to thank Estella Bensimon, George Keller, John Smart, Marta Soto, and William G. Tierney for their valuable comments concerning this work. Please address correspondence concerning this article to James T. Minor, Ph.D., University of Southern California, Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis, Rossier School of Education, Waite Phillips Hall, Room 701E, Los Angeles, CA 90089; e-mail: jminor@usc.edu.*

AMERICAN BEHAVIORAL SCIENTIST, Vol. 46 No. 7, March 2003 960-977

DOI: 10.1177/0002764202250122

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the wildcard in academic governance; they are varied, unpredictable, and can alter outcomes depending on the situation. The extent to which they become better understood and more effectively involved in governance will enable better decision making in universities. What follows is a brief review of the literature, a conceptual frame to view senates, and description of the study. Last, I discuss issues that appear important for enhancing the function of faculty senates and the practice of university decision making.

RESEARCH ON FACULTY GOVERNANCE

The research on faculty senates, in large part, exists within the context of studies on faculty involvement in governance. The majority of studies do not address faculty directly. In addition, limited empirical and theoretical work exists specifically on senates (Floyd, 1994; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Lee, 1991). Consequently, few claims can be made concerning the state of faculty senates. Much of the work that discusses faculty involvement in governance and decision making represents a position either calling for more or less participation from faculty (Birnbaum, 1991; Dimond, 1991; Gerber, 2001; Jordan, 2001; Kissler, 1997; Ramo, 1997). There are virtually no studies that discern what factors most significantly affect the role of senates in governance. I utilize the literature to address two questions, which serve as a starting point for this inquiry:

- What are the existing concepts of effective faculty participation in governance?
- How does the literature define effective faculty senates?

CONCEPTS OF FACULTY PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

One difficulty in addressing the first question is the diversity of higher education institutions and the composition of senates. Another more critical obstacle to addressing concepts of effective faculty participation in governance is the disagreement about the role of faculty in governance (Hamilton, 1999). Two competing voices frame the concept of effective faculty participation in governance. Those who support traditional structures of governance assert that faculty participation is key to sustaining effective institutions. The argument is based on the notion that democratic processes are necessary, with every key constituency involved in campus decision making (Floyd, 1985). In fact, some scholars warn that failing to involve faculty in decision making leads to organizational discord and impairs the fundamental function of higher education (Birnbaum, 1988; Gerber, 2001).

The call for faculty involvement in decision making expanded in recent years to include issues outside the realm of traditional faculty participation. Decisions related to budget, strategic planning, external relations, and the hiring of senior administrators are only a few areas where influence is being renegotiated (Bila,

1999; Dill & Helm, 1988; Dimond, 1991; Miller, 1999). The concept of effective faculty participation from the traditional perspective suggests faculty inclusion in major university decision making as a way to protect faculty interest and ensure that institutions maintain fidelity to the academic mission (Gerber et al., 1997; Ramo, 1997).

Scholars who call for reform claim that governance structures are not suitable for the current decision-making environment. These critics suggest that effective faculty involvement in governance requires new structures that reduce extensive consultation and instead rely on information and an analysis of market forces to determine direction. They claim that for institutions to be effective they must be able to respond quickly to competition and to demands by making fast-paced decisions (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges [AGB], 1996; Duderstadt, 2001). Some even view excessive faculty participation in governance and senates as dysfunctional, impairing institutional progress. Trow (1990) argues that "members of the senate are part-time amateurs, usually with minimal staff support and dependent on the administration for information necessary to make wise policy (or give advice) about the enterprise" (p. 26). Still, both those with a traditional view and the critics agree that extremes are dire; too little or too much faculty involvement in decision making is vaguely viewed as negative. However, evidence suggesting what effective faculty governance means for institutions in general, or for particular sectors of higher education, is indistinct.

In addition to the conventional debate, the technological, political, financial, and social changes experienced by higher education compel some to consider how such changes affect governance systems and the decision-making environment (Collis, 2001; Duderstadt, 2001; Gumport, 2000). Institutional change has thus become central to discussions on governance. Many recognize that shifts in the nature of faculty work, the responsibility of the university presidents, and the types of decisions institutions now face make governance and the involvement of faculty more complex (Benjamin & Carroll, 1999; Collis, 2001; Keller, 2001; Morphew, 1999).

Effective faculty involvement in governance has therefore been discussed in terms of how much influence particular constituency groups have in decision making, not in terms of decision outcomes. Much of the literature seems to focus on participation for the sake of participating, diverting attention from the issue of how involvement affects quality outcomes. More recently, scholars are considering the effects of institutional change on campus governance. In answering the first question, the literature on faculty involvement in governance generally represents three perspectives: (a) Faculty should be, to some degree, involved in nearly all campus decision making; (b) faculty should be involved in decision making, but their involvement ought to be limited principally to academic matters; and (c) higher education institutions have changed so dramatically that there is a need to reconsider how campuses are governed altogether.

DEFINING EFFECTIVE FACULTY GOVERNANCE

The second question of how effective faculty senates are defined poses more of a challenge than the first. Many scholars of governance avoid using the term *effective* altogether. Instead, the term *perceived* is more commonly used as a preface to avoid making definitive statements concerning senate effectiveness. Recognizing the difficulty and risk involved with defining an effective senate is important. What might represent effectiveness in one institution can lead to disaster in another, even on campuses with similar characteristics. Most would agree that providing a prescription for effective faculty governance is difficult, if not impossible. However, advancing empirically based concepts of effective senates can be helpful. For example, doing so may create an ability to test a particular model of effectiveness or invite the development of alternative models. Yet, there has not been a noticeable push from higher education scholars to make determinations about effective faculty senates.

Faculty senate effectiveness is difficult to define given the multiple interpretations of what constitutes sound governance practices (Hamilton, 1999). On many campuses, considerable disagreement exists among campus constituents about what shared governance means and who is to be granted decision-making authority (Drummond & Reitsch, 1995; Evans, 1999; Ramo, 1998; Williams, Gore, Broches, & Lostoski, 1987). Moreover, even if defining an effective senate began with determining the goals of senates and then seeking to measure their success, the diversity of senates relegates such measures to only small samples. Standards for measuring an effective senate have, in many cases, involved an intuitive process of knowing when it works.

The few studies that examine perceptions of effective senates show that senates dominated by faculty, versus those mixed with students and staff, are perceived to be more effective. Senates that are responsive to administrative initiatives are thought to be more effective because of their ability to act, not so much because of the quality of their action. Also, senates that report positive cultural aspects, meaning that campus constituents view them favorably, are also perceived as effective (Lee, 1991). However, senates are more commonly perceived as ineffective due to being unresponsive, having internal disagreement, being uninformed, and being organizationally dysfunctional (Birnbaum, 1989; Jordan, 2001; Scott, 1997; Trow, 1990). The handful of studies that exist on senates are limited due to the use of small case studies and anecdotal descriptions. Consequently, the question of how to define an effective senate remains inadequately addressed. Since the early 1970s, there have been no national studies of faculty senates (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 1966). Perhaps needless to say, a significant need exists for more empirical and theoretical scholarship to address questions concerning the faculty senate.

Given that faculty are likely to continue playing a significant role in academic governance, determining what factors affect their involvement is important. Work that identifies differences across institutional types, as well as structural,

cultural, and functional qualities of senates, is needed. This study represents a step in that direction. Using a national data set, I identify factors that most significantly affect senate effectiveness (as defined herein). First, I offer a conceptual frame to view senates, and then, I describe the study and present the data on which I base my discussion.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAME FOR FACULTY SENATES

Faculty senates are disparate and perform a variety of functions. Therefore, understanding them collectively can be difficult, if not impossible, without a frame by which to view them. Based on recent research I conducted on faculty senates, four models were developed as a way to comprehend senates. I employ these models to establish a conceptual framework. The models (traditional, influential, dormant, and cultural) are briefly described below.

Traditional. Traditional faculty senates function primarily to preserve and represent the interest of the faculty during decision-making processes. They maintain control in areas that have traditionally been the domain of the faculty (i.e., curriculum, program requirements, and tenure and promotion). Their influence over nonacademic issues (i.e., budget, strategic planning, and external relations) is minimal due to limited legal authority. Traditional senates usually respond to administrative initiatives, and their input on most major decision making is in the form of recommendations that can be considered or rejected by the administration. Generally, these senates function as an association that represents the interest of the faculty during decision making rather than an integrated partner in campus governance.

Influential. Similar to traditional senates, influential senates exercise decision-making authority in areas of curriculum and instruction, but they also influence decision making on nonacademic matters such as budget, athletics, and development. Influential senates can benefit from extensive legal authority, but their influence also can result from being well organized and engaged in campus decision making. These senates are assertive and take the initiative on issues that extend beyond faculty matters to those that concern the entire institution. Other governing constituencies view influential senates as a legitimate integrated governing body of the campus and as having the ability to create change.

Dormant. Dormant faculty senates are usually marked by inactivity and exist largely as a ceremonial pastime for faculty. Although these senates may have structures similar to others, their function in campus decision making is minimal. Decision making that usually rests with faculty via the senate is conducted at the school or college level. Although these senates do not play a role in decision making, they may serve latent functions that are important to faculty or for

maintaining the existing power structure. Dormant senates are not considered a factor in major university decision making. As a result, faculty may participate in governance through alternative means.

Cultural. The role these senates play in campus decision making is influenced by cultural dynamics that continually change. Issues such as personnel, recent decision-making history, and social interaction manipulate the function of these senates more than structural characteristics. For example, informal processes such as the provost making a determination on an issue based on the advice of well-respected senior faculty members may weigh more heavily on decision outcomes than the formal proceedings of the senate. In many instances, structural ineffectiveness can lead to informal processes or “deal cutting” that circumvents formal processes of the senate. Other cultural dynamics such as distrust among constituents, composition and behavior of key personnel, and institutional history are just a few factors that can affect decision making more than formal processes. Consequently, the faculty’s role in campus governance is dictated by fluid cultural dynamics more than structural qualities. As the cultural dynamics of the senate change (e.g., turnover in a key position), so does the role it plays in decision making.

These models (traditional, influential, dormant, and cultural) represent a frame to collectively view faculty senates. I do not suggest that one model is usually more effective than another. Some senates may fall in between or across models depending on the decision type and their ability to shift from one model to another. I employ them as a way to understand the multiple functions of senates. I use them in this study to understand the sample.

A NATIONAL SURVEY

To establish an empirical base for scholarship, I conducted a national survey to gauge the state of faculty senates in 4-year colleges and universities. The intent was to survey campus constituents about various structural, cultural, and functional aspects of their faculty senate. To be clear, I use the term *faculty senate* to refer to numerous variations of faculty governing bodies. *Faculty council*, *academic senate*, or other terms may be alternatively employed. The survey was intended to provide a national description of faculty senate involvement in institutional governance across different institutional types and according to various campus constituents.

Based on the Carnegie Classification of Higher Education Institutions, the sample included 150 doctoral institutions, 302 master’s institutions, and 311 baccalaureate institutions. The sampled institutions represent approximately 55% of all institutions from the population of each sector. Among the doctoral universities, 79 were public and 71 were private. Among the master’s institutions, 140 were public and 162 were private. And among the liberal arts colleges, 68 institutions were public and 243 were private. These ratios also closely

TABLE 1: Response Rate for Institutions and Constituency Groups

	<i>Targeted</i>	<i>Response Rate</i>
Institutions		
Doctoral	150	119 (79%)
Master's	302	236 (78%)
Baccalaureate	311	233 (75%)
Total	<i>N</i> = 763	<i>N</i> = 588 (77%)
Constituency groups		
Academic vice president	757	416 (55%)
Faculty senate chair	749	509 (68%)
Faculty	2,256	1,128 (50%)
Total	<i>N</i> = 3,762	<i>N</i> = 2,053 (55%)

resemble the ratio of public versus private institutions in the population of each institutional sector.

From each institution, five individuals were targeted: the chief academic officer, the faculty senate president, and three department chairs from various disciplines. More than 3,500 participants were targeted. Each was invited to complete the 35-item Web-based survey over a 4-week period. Institutional response rates are reported in Table 1.

The data from the Web-based survey were gathered and analyzed to determine descriptive statistics and categorical variance using ANOVA (an analysis of variance). Regression analyses were then used to determine what factors most significantly predict senate effectiveness. To determine effectiveness, three Likert-scaled items were combined to create a dependent variable ESENATE: (a) Faculty at my institution are satisfied with the structure and function of the senate; (b) during major college/university decision making, the senate is effective in helping reach resolutions to issues under consideration; and (c) others from the campus community (administrators, governing board, students) view the senate as powerful. A reliability analysis was run for the three variables yielding an alpha coefficient of .8042. A range of independent variables that represent cultural aspects of the senate, venue of faculty participation in campus decision making, and level of faculty influence in particular decision types were used as predictors of ESENATE. In addition, an ANOVA and cross-tab were run to determine variance on the dependent variable across institutional sectors (baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral).

CULTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SENATE

The findings are categorized in two sections. The first section shows descriptive statistics and percentages for cultural and functional characteristics of

TABLE 2: Response Percentages for Items Assessing Perceptions of Governance Culture

Shared governance is an important part of the institutions value and identity.	
Academic vice presidents	96
Faculty senate presidents	85
Faculty	77
All respondents	83
Communication between campus constituents is good or sufficient to make progress during decision making.	
Academic vice presidents	88
Faculty senate presidents	70
Faculty	66
All respondents	75
There is a significant level of trust between the faculty and the president.	
Academic vice presidents	89
Faculty senate presidents	72
Faculty	67
All respondents	77
I agree that there is a high level of faculty interest in senate activity on my campus.	
Baccalaureate	54
Master's	39
Doctoral	19
All institutions	41

senates. Institutional and constituency breakdowns are shown only where the variance between categories is statistically significant. In the second section, results of the regression analysis, ANOVA, and cross-tab are provided to show predictors of senate effectiveness and differences across institutional types.

The cultural elements of senates refer to beliefs, attitudes, and perceptual factors that can affect the role senates play in governance. Findings reveal that 83% of all respondents believe that shared governance is an important part of their institution's value and identity. Among the vice presidents in the sample, 96% report this to be true, compared to 85% among senate presidents and 77% among faculty. Shared governance was shown to be a strong institutional value across all institutional types. In addition, the quality of communication that takes place between university constituents (governing board members, the president, and faculty) was reportedly high. Of vice presidents in the sample, 88% report that communication between constituents is sufficient to make progress or good, compared to 70% among senate presidents and 66% among faculty. Of all respondents, 77% report that a significant level of trust exists between the president and faculty; 89% of vice presidents in the sample report significant trust exists between the president and faculty, compared to 72% among senate presidents and 67% among faculty members. A summary of these findings is reported in Table 2.

In spite of reporting significant trust, sufficient communication, and the belief that shared governance is important as an institutional value, this sample reports

that faculty are not meaningfully involved in decision making. Of respondents from all institutions, 56% identified the lack of active faculty involvement in campus decision making as a critical challenge to effective governance. Consonant with that, there is a reported lack of interest in senate activity. In response to a question assessing the level of interest faculty have in senate activity, just 41% of all institutions agreed that it was high. The level of faculty interest in senate activity is significantly higher in baccalaureate institutions than in master's and doctoral institutions in the sample (see Table 2). Although the majority of respondents believe that shared governance is important and that sufficient trust and communication exists between constituents, there is significant dissatisfaction with how faculty are involved in decision making. Consequently, positive cultural aspects of governance are not closely related to satisfaction with the nature of senate involvement in campus decision making.

Faculty senates are involved in decision making to varying degrees depending on the issue, context, and the extent of their authority. The functional aspects of senates refer to areas in which senates have decision-making authority and the ways their influence is exercised. Findings show that faculty maintain significant influence over matters related to undergraduate curriculum. Of respondents, 92% from baccalaureate institutions report faculty have substantial influence over undergraduate curriculum compared to 85% of those in master's institutions and 81% in doctoral institutions. Faculty report having the least amount of influence in areas of strategic planning and setting budget priorities. This is particularly important because more than 60% of respondents report that the most critical issues facing their institution in the upcoming year are related to budget shortfalls. Table 3 illustrates levels of faculty influence in several areas of decision making.

Table 3 also illustrates how faculty influence is expressed in the particular areas of decision making. For example, faculty influence over issues of curriculum is expressed through formal authority, whereas influence over issues concerning distance education and intellectual property is expressed informally. Formal influence refers to having legislative authority or substantial voting membership on a decision-making body. Informal influence refers to the formulation of reports, recommendations, taking a collective position on an issue, or other actions not based on a formal delegation of authority. Other means of expressing influence include having veto power or refusing to participate in decision making. These forms were expressed much less frequently. One example of how the two (influence and expression of influence) intersect is that only 12% of respondents report that faculty have substantial influence in setting strategic and budget priorities, yet 65% report that faculty exercise some form of informal influence in decision making on these matters. Overall, faculty maintain significant influence over areas of curriculum and policy related to promotion and tenure standards, and most exercise formal authority in these areas. Faculty have the least influence over evaluation of the president and provost and

TABLE 3: Decision Types and Percentages for Level of Influence and Expression of Influence

<i>Decision Type</i>	<i>Substantial Influence</i>	<i>Expression of Influence</i>
Undergraduate curriculum	87	67
Tenure and promotion standards	70	59
Selection of the president and provost	27	51
Evaluation of the president and provost	17	40
Setting strategic and budget priorities	12	65
Policies pertaining to intellectual property and distance education	26	44

TABLE 4: Predictors of (ESENATE) Senate Effectiveness (Standardized Beta Coefficients)

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Shared governance is an important part of the institution	.045*	.038*	.026
Trust	.018	.028	.015
Communication	.001	.001	.003
Faculty involvement in senate	.501***	.455***	.419***
Faculty interest in senate	.209***	.194***	.177***
Participation in department		.078***	.036
Participation in standing committee		.128***	.061**
Participation in ad hoc committee		.047*	.005
Educational policy			.033
Curriculum			.064**
Tenure and promotion			.098***
Evaluation of provost/president			-.012
Selection of provost/president			.073***
Setting strategic and budget priorities			.076**
R^2	.459***	.490***	.530***

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

setting strategic and budget priorities. Faculty influence over these matters is expressed informally.

The second part of this analysis involved running three regression models to determine which variables significantly predict what I defined here as “senate effectiveness” (ESENATE). Results from the regression analysis are shown in Table 4.

In the first model, cultural measures (level of trust, communication, interest in the senate, involvement in the senate, and the importance of shared governance on campus) were used as predictors of ESENATE. The degree to which shared governance is regarded as an important part of the institutional value and identity is a significant predictor of senate effectiveness ($p < .05$). Yet, levels of trust and communication were not significant predictors of an effective senate. Although levels of trust and communication are high across all institutions in

this sample, they are not statistically significant predictors of an effective senate. The level of faculty involvement in the senate and the level of faculty interest in senate activity were much stronger predictors of an effective senate ($p < .001$). High levels of faculty interest and involvement in senate activities are positively correlated with senate effectiveness.

In the second model, I measured venue of faculty participation in decision making. That is, how does faculty participation in departmental decision making, standing administrative/faculty committees, and ad hoc committees predict senate effectiveness? The results show that each—faculty participation in decision making at the departmental level ($p < .001$), in standing faculty/administrative committees ($p < .001$), and on ad hoc committees ($p < .05$)—is a significant predictor of an effective senate. Faculty participation in decision making in multiple, or alternative, venues is positively correlated with senate effectiveness. The cultural variables in Model 1 were virtually unaffected by the inclusion of the participation items.

The third model measures areas of faculty influence. Those variables include (a) faculty influence over educational policy (e.g., admission standards), (b) curriculum, (c) issues concerning promotion and tenure, (d) evaluation of the president and provost, (e) selection of the president and provost, and (f) setting strategic and budget priorities. Faculty influence over educational policy was not shown to be significant. In addition, evaluation of the president/provost was not shown to be a significant predictor of senate effectiveness. Furthermore, the coefficient for this variable was negative, which suggests that senates that do evaluate their president and provost are likely to score lower on the ESENATE variable. Faculty influence over undergraduate curriculum, issues related to promotion and tenure, selection of the president/provost, and setting strategic and budget priorities were all shown to be significant predictors. In the third model, the effects of faculty influence in decision making were shown to be stronger predictors, eliminating the effects of the variable measuring the importance of shared governance as an institutional value.

Using ANOVA and cross-tabs, the sample was divided by institutional sectors (baccalaureate, master's, doctoral) and measured to determine where each sector scores on the variable ESENATE. The results show that baccalaureate institutions score higher than master's and doctoral institutions in this sample. Doctoral institutions ranked the lowest. Table 5 shows the results from these analyses.

Collectively, these findings indicate that shared governance remains a strong institutional value among all campus constituents and across the three sectors of higher education in this sample. Faculty in this sample maintain significant control over curriculum and issues related to tenure and promotion and they usually have formal authority over such matters. Faculty in this sample have the least influence in areas of strategic planning and budgetary matters but report having informal authority in such areas. The majority of respondents also report that a sufficient amount of trust and communication exists between constituencies to

TABLE 5: Cross-Tab of Senate Effectiveness (ESENATE) by Institutional Type (in percentages)

<i>ESENATE</i>	<i>Baccalaureate</i>	<i>Master's</i>	<i>Doctoral</i>	<i>Average</i>
Low	18	25	30	24
Medium	59	56	57	57
High	22	18	12	17

make progress in decision making. Yet, many faculty report not being meaningfully involved in decision making. Moreover, levels of trust and communication are not significant predictors of senate effectiveness. In addition, a significant lack of interest and involvement in senate activity exists among faculty. This is particularly evident in doctoral institutions.

Among the 14 variables used in the regression models to predict senate effectiveness, the five strongest predictors were (a) high levels of faculty involvement in the senate, (b) high levels of faculty interest in senate activity, (c) having significant influence over issues related to tenure and promotion, (d) having significant influence in the selection of the provost and president, and (e) having significant influence in setting strategic and budget priorities. In the following section, I briefly discuss the challenges of faculty involvement in the senate and the effects of trust versus authority on senate effectiveness. In doing so, I raise questions related to improving the role senates play in campus governance.

FACULTY INVOLVEMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Faculty in baccalaureate institutions are significantly more involved in senate activity and have more effective senates than those in master's and doctoral institutions. Consequently, a potential lesson may be learned from this institutional sector. Why are faculty in baccalaureate institutions more interested and involved in the senate? Conventional wisdom suggests that greater institutional support leads to greater participation, but I argue that institutional support for senate operations does not necessarily increase faculty interest or participation. Based on the fact that baccalaureate institutions received the least amount of support for their senate operations, I view institutional support as a secondary incentive for faculty participation.

More important than institutional support such as release time or secretarial support is the impact of one's involvement in the senate. Notwithstanding differences of institutional type, the issue may not be about how much is offered but what involvement means for faculty. The ability to influence decision outcomes is likely to outweigh release time, a stipend, or other incentives currently being offered to faculty for investing in senate activity. Presumably, ability to shape decision outcomes is more closely related to the concept of meaningful involvement. Certainly, institutional factors such as size affect the ability of senate

participants to manipulate decisions. Individuals in smaller institutions are more likely to directly influence decision outcomes. Structurally, fewer organizational obstacles for participation are likely to exist in smaller institutions. Consequently, the impact of one's labor may be more direct and yield much faster results, making participation more rewarding. Arguably, higher levels of interest and participation in the senate among faculty in baccalaureate institutions has less to do with institutional support than with the possibility of experiencing the results of their work and investment in the senate. Given this reason, are there ways larger institutions can assimilate the effects of meaningful faculty involvement?

Institutional culture and beliefs about participation and community also can influence how constituencies are involved in decision making. Scholars who study the nature of faculty work suggest that faculty are socialized differently across institutional types, which can affect their disposition on participation (Austin, Rice, & Splete, 1988). Moreover, the culture of baccalaureate institutions is often more communal than autonomous, creating environments where involvement and participation is customary. Given such differences, institutional factors and the nature of involvement are important when considering factors closely associated with faculty participation in senates.

The data from this sample show that institutional support and participation are inversely correlated. As a result, the importance and effects of institutional support must be questioned. Keep in mind that most forms of institutional support are offered only to the president or executive committee of the senate. Most at-large members are credited for service that is valued more or less depending on institutional type. How important is release time, secretarial support, or budgetary support to faculty participation? How might resources be redistributed to more positively encourage faculty involvement in the senate? Are some forms of institutional support more effective than others? The inverse relationship between institutional support and faculty involvement does not suggest support is irrelevant. Instead, it suggests that the support and rewards currently being provided (mainly at doctoral institutions) are ineffective. Existing concepts and practices of providing institutional support for senates deserve reconsideration.

TRUST VERSUS AUTHORITY

Trust and communication are concepts often associated with academic governance. It is generally assumed that institutions where considerable trust and communication exist between campus constituents are institutions where campus decision making is more functional. The fact that neither trust nor communication were significant predictors of senate effectiveness in this sample prompts an interesting question: Can effective senates exist on campuses where low levels of trust and communication exist between constituencies? As senate effectiveness is measured in this study, the answer seems to be yes. Still, most in higher education would argue that trust and communication are important for

shared governance on any campus. Before implying that trust and communication are unimportant, another way of addressing the question is to say that other factors influence effectiveness more. Can senates experiencing distrust and poor communication but high levels of influence in decision making be effective? While discussing campus governance, most would agree that adversarial relationships between senates and other campus governing bodies are bad for shared governance. However, when discussing senate effectiveness, how much authority faculty have determines effectiveness more than how well they get along with other campus governing bodies.

One common complaint among faculty is that they have limited authority. This is particularly true concerning nonacademic issues. Many faculty equate legal authority with legitimate authority. Without such authority, many senates view themselves as unable to significantly influence decision making on important issues beyond curriculum and tenure. The two areas of decision making that most strongly predict senate effectiveness (selection of the president/provost and setting strategic/budget priorities) are areas where faculty have the least amount of influence. Clearly, the issue of giving senates more formal authority can create challenges for presidents and governing boards. Advocates for stronger university presidents claim that increasing faculty authority weakens much-needed presidential leadership (AGB, 1996). Although both arguments have merit, for senates to gain more formal authority, the influence of other governing bodies is lessened, creating a complex decision-making environment with diffuse power and competing interests.

Structural and cultural changes experienced in higher education turns attention to the question of whether current governance structures are adequate for the decision-making environment (Baldwin & Leslie, 2001). Do current governance structures negatively affect senate effectiveness? Should faculty senates have more decision-making authority outside of their traditional domain? Although the results from this study suggest yes, others question the effectiveness of faculty being extensively involved in nonacademic decision making. Citing lack of information, lack of administrative infrastructure, and narrow focus, some question the ability of faculty to effectively deal with complex institutional issues (Trow, 1990).

In my estimation, the challenges of faculty involvement in decision making outside of their traditional domain are related to the consequences of their involvement, not so much the idea of sharing authority. Drawbacks often associated with faculty involvement in decision making include the lack of timeliness, faculty having a narrow view of the institution instead of one that is comprehensive, and the culture of us (faculty) against them (administration) that permeates many campuses. Although most campus constituents would agree that faculty involvement in decision making is valuable, the consequence of their involvement creates undesirable operational challenges. In some cases, accepting the results of simply not involving faculty in decision making is viewed as the lesser of two evils. Although this approach may represent one way of moving forward,

acceptance of a lesser evil does not necessarily imply sound governance systems. The data indicate faculty involvement in nonacademic decision making contributes significantly to senate effectiveness. Institutions must be creative in finding ways to grant greater formal influence to senates while, at the same time, maintaining functional governance structures. If failing to involve faculty in decision making leads to ineffective senates, facing the challenges of improving current governance structures may be the lesser evil.

Some in higher education hold that institutional responsiveness is overrated, noting the success some campuses experienced maintaining the status quo. However, the dissatisfaction among many faculty over the quality of involvement in decision making is worthy of concern. To some in higher education, it seems as if asking colleges and universities to be flexible is asking too much. Presumably, 10 years ago, asking institutions to raise \$100 million of private revenue over a 3-year period might have seemed to ask a great deal. The point is that for institutions to survive, generating private revenue was a must. Employing effective governance strategies is becoming increasingly important for institutional success in the 21st century.

TRADITIONAL FACULTY SENATES

How suitable are governance structures for the current decision-making environment? Although the answer may not be apparent, it is evident that most institutions in this sample typify traditional senates. Using the models of faculty senates, the majority have influence over academic matters, limited influence over nonacademic matters, and express their influence informally. Given the discussion surrounding faculty involvement, it is clear that many senates play traditional roles in governance despite notable institutional change.

Although the consequences of having a traditional senate are unknown, two characteristics of traditional senates deserve mention. The first is that most traditional senates respond to administrative initiatives rarely advancing independent agendas. This can have two consequences. On one hand, senates that lack direction or initiative might be viewed as disengaged by the administration. On the other hand, being responsive to administrative initiatives due to the absence of an independent agenda can be viewed as cooperative. Seemingly, assertive senates with initiatives representative of institutional goals symbolize an ideal medium.

Second, traditional senates act as associations that represent the faculty rather than integrated partners in campus governance. As a result of having better knowledge about cultural and functional elements of the senate, administrative disposition and faculty activism become key areas of future investigation. Using these data helps better understand the gap between the idea and the actual process. Now the relationship between models of faculty senates and senate effectiveness needs to be explored. What kind of faculty make up traditional senates? What role does leadership play in how senates function? Presumably,

acting as an association rather than an integrated partner can contribute to exclusion in decision making or perpetuate adversarial relationships with administration. On other campuses, it can represent acceptable practice. The point is that combining new research with use of models can enhance understanding about faculty governance.

Using models creates a unit of analysis and a means to compare and contrast senate characteristics. While in search of ways to improve governance systems it is important to consider institutional contexts as well as senate types. No one solution is appropriate for all campuses that face challenges related to governance, which makes understanding differences more important.

CONCLUSION: ASSESSING THE SENATE

Governance structures and decision-making processes are of great importance because they are the means that determine institutional direction. In addition, faculty senates are likely to remain a critical component of campus governance in the coming years. Assessing what issues critically affect faculty senates is one way of prompting an examination of how to improve institutional governance. Given the institutional diversity that exists, the aim has not been to prescribe a particular plan of action. Rather, it has been to provide a better understanding about faculty senates and identify what issues most critically affect them. The importance of faculty involvement and issues of trust as related to senate effectiveness provide momentum for future discussion, action, and further study.

This study brings to light the importance of only a few issues that inform the higher education community about faculty senates. To a large extent, senates remain understudied. The need exists for additional work that determines how other factors, such as senate leadership, or particular institutional characteristics affect campus governance. Meanwhile, the focus for practice must be to address the known challenges that impede senate effectiveness. Creating alternative governance structures and improving faculty involvement in the senate represents a place to start.

Much has been said about the apparent changes higher education has undergone. The consequence of such invites a reevaluation of many aspects, including the purpose, mission, leadership, and financial structure of higher education. Governance structures are a necessary part of the discussion.

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