Overview of Preliminary Report

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How Did We Get Here?

Fall 2013-Spring 2016: FAEC Subcommittee on Shared Governance

- Proposed a set of general principles and a methodology for assessing shared governance at the College via case study analysis (leading to two annual reports).
- Crucial limitations: principles and assessment methodology were developed completely by the Faculty, rather than through a shared process. Moreover, there was no formal joint commitment to adhere to the principles.

Fall 2016: Initiation of Joint Process

- FAEC Delegation (K. McMurdy, T. Kwak, G. Torres-Baumgarten) attendance at AAUP Shared Governance conference (Washington, DC) supported by the Office of the Provost.
- FA President Kwak and Provost Barnett agree to constitute a task force on Shared Governance at Ramapo College and jointly compose a Charge for the SGTF.

Official Charge to the Shared Governance Task Force (SGTF)

The Task Force on Shared Governance at Ramapo College is charged with developing principles of shared governance that are in keeping with the mission of the College and that will allow the institution to fulfill its vision and strategic goals.

We envision fulfilling this charge by producing a document containing:
- Overarching Goals and Organizing Principles (for SG at Ramapo College)
- Dynamic Protocol for Shared Decision-Making
- Practical Recommendations for Successful Implementation
Membership of the Task Force

- Ken McMurdy, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Task Force Chair
- Beth Barnett, Provost and VP of Academic Affairs
- Marta Bautis, Professor of Documentary and News Production
- Dean Chen, Associate Professor of Political Science
- Kirsten DaSilva, VP of Administration and Finance
- John Gronbeck-Tedesco, Associate Professor of American Studies
- Stephan Lally, President, Student Government Association
- Nicholas Lapiska, Senate President, Student Government Association
- Christopher Romano, VP of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs
- Eddie Saiff, Dean, School of Theoretical and Applied Science
- Marcia Sexton, Technical Services Librarian
- Gladys Torres-Baumgarten, Professor of International Business
- Ashwani Vasishth, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies
- Brittany Williams-Goldstein, Chief of Staff and Board Liaison

Spiralling In Toward Shared Governance: A Dynamic Model

- **Control of Implementation**
  - **Tight**
  - **Loose**

- **Bureaucratic**
  - Hierarchic Leadership
  - Formal and Top-Down

- **Collegial**
  - Servant Leader
  - Consensual and Bottom-Up

- **Corporate**
  - Transformational Leadership
  - Strategic and Political

- **Enterprise**
  - Collective Leadership
  - Flexible and Devolved

Overarching Goals and Organizing Principles

Our Definition of Shared Governance

Shared governance is more than shared decision-making. It begins with building and nurturing partnerships and collaborative relationships across and within multiple stakeholder groups, which serve as the foundation for healthy shared decision-making. At its best, such a form of governance gives standing to stakeholder groups including Students, Faculty, Staff and Administration through suitable representative mechanisms.

Shared Governance Will:
• Strengthen the quality of our collective decisions by valuing expertise and diversity of perspectives;
• Advance the College’s strategic goals;
• Facilitate inclusive and aspirational thinking;
• Foster a culture of mutual ownership and accountability;
• Provide an effective forum for dialog about crucial and controversial issues.

Three Organizing Principles

1. Respect and Collegiality
• Stakeholders will be considered to be well-intentioned and working toward what is in the best interest of the College according to their own understanding.
• Stakeholders have different (complementary) expertise and information, which can be leveraged together to improve decision-making and mitigate potential conflicts.
• Decisions that are grounded in a robust collaborative governance model may not satisfy all stakeholders but are still respected as the products of a shared, collaborative process.

2. Trust and Transparency
• All stakeholders have a responsibility to proactively cultivate trust.
• Trust is best fostered by the maximal (appropriate) level of transparency.
• Communication is most effective when it is multi-directional and timely.

3. Clarity and Compliance
• At the outset of shared decision-making, the process, timeline, and relative roles (lead, consultative, etc.) should be understood by all involved stakeholders.
• Cyclical reassessment processes will reveal opportunities for improvement and reinforcement.
• Pressures on compliance may include time limitations, external regulations, accreditation stipulations, and other such constraints.
Dynamic Protocol for Shared Decision-Making

Ideally, decisions should be shared if they significantly impact multiple stakeholder groups and/or significantly benefit from the expertise of multiple stakeholder groups.

However, even for such decisions, external factors (collective bargaining agreement(s), justified expediency, etc.) may preclude ordinary shared governance or impose restrictive parameters.

At the outset of a decision that does call for shared governance, leaders of the involved stakeholder groups should meet to agree upon relative roles (primary, secondary, tertiary, as defined below) and to devise a Shared Governance Plan.

Shared Governance Plan

• Identify appropriate channels for essential communication/consultation.
• Identify external factors and data that must be considered.
• Develop an appropriate timeline.
• Determine how final decision will be made.
• Determine how and when to appropriately communicate results to the broader community.

Relative Roles in Shared Governance

While, in reality, relative roles for a shared decision should be viewed as a continuum, the following rough classification may serve as a useful starting point:

Primary Role: Essentially, this is the stakeholder group/body who makes the final decision. Decisions of this group/body should be followed except in extraordinary circumstances and for compelling and clearly articulated reasons. Practically speaking, there can be only one group/body fulfilling the primary decision-making role for a particular decision.

Secondary Role: This stakeholder group/body has no formal role in making the final decision, but should be formally and meaningfully consulted (often due to general expertise and/or high impact on function). There can be multiple groups/bodies fulfilling secondary roles, and these groups/bodies may initiate the shared decision-making process. Throughout the consultation phase, groups fulfilling primary and secondary roles have equal voice and interaction should be viewed as a partnership.

Tertiary Role: This stakeholder group/body is informed/updated regularly throughout the consultation phase, and consulted with as needed on an ad-hoc basis due to specific expertise (perhaps related to implementation) and/or significant impact.
Additional Notes

• As a general rule, steps should be taken to make certain that all stakeholder groups across the College have the opportunity to be as informed as possible about important decisions – shared and otherwise. (See Overarching Goals and Organizing Principles.)

• The Task Force has developed some guidelines for determining when various stakeholder groups fulfill primary, secondary or tertiary decision-making roles. However, it is important to recognize that no such guidelines can ever be exhaustive.

Sample Guidelines for Assigning Relative Roles

What is Curriculum (Direct) vs. Curriculum (Indirect)?

**Curriculum (Direct)** = Collection of credit-bearing courses and programs that are offered at the College, as well as the content therein. For decisions regarding curriculum (direct), Faculty have primary responsibility. However, the Administration may also have secondary responsibility if and when the decision will substantially impact administrative functions at the College, be subject to external limitations, or require significant additional resources. Faculty are hence obligated to consult with the Administration on such issues.

**Curriculum (Indirect)** = Decisions that do not directly concern curriculum (as defined above), but which nevertheless have high impact on the ability of the Faculty to effectively deliver the curriculum and fulfill the College’s educational mission. For such decisions, while the Administration has primary responsibility, Faculty have secondary responsibility and should be meaningfully consulted.
Sample Guidelines for Assigning Relative Roles

Students should have a secondary decision-making role when a decision directly concerns or has high impact on the overall student experience and/or campus life. Some examples include but are not limited to:

- Housing/Dining
- Sports/Recreation
- Support Services (OSS, Health Office, Counseling, Orientations, Center for Reading and Writing, etc.)
- Club/Organization Policies
- Decisions pertaining to Campus Climate

Examples of Shared Decision-Making Protocol

(1) New Programs Initiative: Based on enrollment trends, employment data, and student interest, Administrators would like to create/modify programs to address emerging/growing demand fields. New academic programs fall within the curriculum of the College. Hence, Faculty fulfill the primary decision-making role while Administrators fulfill a secondary role due to the potential impact on college enrollment, finances, and human resources. Stakeholder heads meet to devise a SG plan. It is agreed that the initiative will be presented at Unit Councils and FA. Follow-up (feasibility study, budget and marketing plans, etc.) would go through ARC and the Provost’s Office. Ultimately, decisions on new programs must be approved by the Ramapo College Board of Trustees.

(2) Policy on Credits for a Major: This policy has high curricular impact. While Administrators fulfill the primary decision-making role, Faculty fulfill a secondary role. Stakeholder heads meet to devise a SG plan. It is agreed that essential communication and consultation should happen through two channels: Deans’ Council (communicating with Unit Council) and All Conveners meeting.
Practical Recommendations for Implementation

In order to effectively implement our shared governance framework, we must find ways to improve transparency, communication (both inter- and intra- stakeholder group), and effective representation. We have a variety of practical recommendations for accomplishing this goal.

• More open meetings
• Consistent advance notice of meeting agendas
• Multi-channel informing of items currently under review
• Centralized and current information on all College committees and governance groups
• Regular joint meetings between Stakeholder leadership
• Consistent expectations for sharing of meeting takeaways by liaisons
• Mentorship for new members of representative bodies
• Annual Shared Governance Retreat

Additional Recommendations Under Consideration

Assessment of Shared Governance
In the spirit of “cyclical reassessment” and “opportunities for improvement and reinforcement”, we may want to institute mechanisms for regular assessment of shared governance at the College (perhaps akin to the FAEC Subcommittee work).

Staff Representation
Currently, there does not exist a representative mechanism for Staff, considered as a stakeholder group, analogous to FA or SGA. We consider this to be an impediment to involving Staff in shared governance at the College and recommend that a representative mechanism for staff be established.

Trust-Building
As with effective communication, successful shared governance in any model will naturally depend deeply on trust. (See Overarching Goals and Principles.) Therefore, it would be helpful to develop recommendations for trust-building across and within stakeholder groups at the College.
Post Report Issuance:

- Endorsed by the Faculty Assembly, the Student Government Association, the President’s Cabinet

- Focus groups on Staff Organization

- Dynamic Protocol Employed for Strategic Plan Extension

- Presentation at the President’s Advisory Council