

University of the Virgin Islands

VISION 2012



Shared Governance Framework

Revised January 23, 2009

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Essentials of Shared Governance

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education standard on leadership and governance states as follows:

The Commission on Higher Education expects a climate of shared collegial governance in which all constituencies (such as faculty, administration, staff, students and governing board members, as determined by each institution) involved in carrying out the institution's mission and goals participate in the governance function in a manner appropriate to that institution. Institutions should seek to create a governance environment in which issues concerning mission, vision, program planning, resource allocation and others, as appropriate, can be discussed openly by those who are responsible for each activity. Within any system of shared governance, each major constituency must carry out its separate but complementary roles and responsibilities. Each must contribute to an appropriate degree so that decision-makers and goal-setters consider information from all relevant constituencies. While reflecting institutional mission, perspective, and culture, collegial governance structures should acknowledge also the need for timely decision-making.

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

1. a well-defined system of collegial governance including written policies outlining governance responsibilities of administration and faculty and readily available to the campus community;
2. written governing documents, such as a constitution, by-laws, enabling legislation, charter or other similar documents, that:
 - a) delineate the governance structure and provide for collegial governance, and the structure's composition, duties and responsibilities. . . .
 - b) assign authority and accountability for policy development and decision making, including a process for the involvement of appropriate institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making;

The "Statement on Governance of Colleges and Universities" jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), makes the following statement on shared governance:

The variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students, and others. The relationship calls for adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort.

Joint effort in an academic institution will take a variety of forms appropriate to the kinds of situations encountered. In some instances, an initial exploration or recommendation will be made by the president with consideration by the faculty at a later stage; in other instances, a first and essentially definitive recommendation will be made by the faculty, subject to the endorsement of the president and the governing board. In still others, a substantive

contribution can be made when student leaders are responsibly involved in the process. Although the variety of such approaches may be wide, at least two general conclusions regarding joint effort seem clearly warranted:

- 1 important areas of action involve at one time or another the initiating capacity and decision-making participation of all the institutional components, and
- 2 differences in the weight of each voice, from one point to the next, should be determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand.

Effective planning demands that the broadest possible exchange of information and opinion should be the rule for communication among the components of a college or university. The channels of communication should be established and maintained by joint endeavor. Distinction should be observed between the institutional system of communication and the system of responsibility for the making of decisions. At the University of the Virgin Islands, shared governance has been accepted as a goal by all parties, but it has never been systematically implemented.

As stated in the 2006 Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Self Study Report, "Shared governance is one of the University's core values, but the University has never explicitly defined the model by which it will achieve this value." The conflicting visions and lack of clarity are often common of shared governance. Whatever the definition of shared governance, the principle that is articulated is etched in four of UVI's 10 stated core values:

Teamwork
Collegiality and shared governance
Inclusiveness of ideas
Principled leadership.

The University of Arizona identified six "best practices" described below to create a culture that embraces shared governance and creates opportunities for shared governance throughout the university. The UVI community has voiced support for these six "best practices":

1. Create an Atmosphere that Fosters Trust

Effective shared governance depends on accountability, a trust among the parties. This trust then provides the foundation for effective activities and efficient use of participant's time and knowledge. Examples of the building blocks of trust include: fully sharing appropriate information in a timely manner and providing adequate time for effective dialog, providing relevant background for the subject at hand to allow for fully informed choices, and informal gatherings in addition to the formal group efforts.

2. Develop a Collaborative Attitude and Participatory Decision Process

The parties involved in shared governance are interdependent and must be involved in joint actions when appropriate. Examples include: joint agenda development, allowing appropriate time for

consultation, providing an honest airing of relevant issues, and adequate discussion opportunities but without unnecessary delay.

3. Communicate Extensively

Effective communication is essential for successful shared governance. Provide what is needed fully and early in the process and communicate final decisions to all parties. The regular communication channels should be widely known.

4. Encourage Informed Participation and Training

The university and unit environment should respect appropriate participation by faculty, academic professionals and staff, one that allows for methods for new faculty and others to learn about opportunities for involvement. Examples of these methods include: workshops, retreats, informal meetings with administrators and other faculty. Appropriate rewards for service need to be identified and activities need to be seen as important from the perspectives of involved faculty, administrators, staff and appointed personnel.

5. Focus on Effective and Efficient Processes and Subjects

Those involved in shared governance need to be sufficiently informed to participate effectively. They need to understand and agree on the roles of faculty and administrators. It should be clear which group has the primary responsibilities for specific topics (i.e., faculty or administration). Shared governance does not mean everything has to be done by joint efforts or by delegating decision making to the faculty. Suitable resources and support must be made available for shared governance to be effective and efficient.

6. Allow for Flexibility in Shared Governance Structures

While [university, schools, and departments] shall have some form of shared governance, the forms will vary, as the circumstances of each unit vary, but be consistent with the aims of shared governance. Each organizational unit should have written rules/procedures regarding the purpose and operation for the shared governance process. The methods of participation will vary among faculty, academic professionals, staff and students (e.g., election or appointment, policy making or implementation, focused topics or strategic issues). The methods of selection will vary (e.g., representation by subunit or major unit, election, ex-officio, or appointment).¹

Institutional leadership is very important in framing and maintaining a commitment to the principles and practice of shared governance. All stakeholders must be stewards of good governance.

For UVI, the need to clarify and make more effective its inclusive governance approach and the search of a model of governance that will ensure representative shared governance is consistent with the strategic vision and direction of the University. The main factors for creating an effective shared governance system for UVI will need to include:

A. Internal Stakeholders

1. UVI Board of Trustees
2. UVI Executives and Administrators
 - i. UVI President
 - ii. UVI Cabinet
3. UVI Faculty (teaching (full- and part-time), research, and library faculty)
4. UVI Staff (regular, professional, and administrative staff)
5. UVI Students (all full-time, part-time, undergraduate, and graduate students)

B. Shared Governance

Shared governance includes structure and processes wherein the decision-making responsibility is shared among those affected by decisions.² The “process fosters a sense of empowerment, equal partnership, and a vested interest in successful outcomes of institutional policy and implementation decisions”.³ Shared governance involves stakeholders “early on in the processes and establishes policies” in areas including but not limited to “mission, strategic direction, and selection processes for administrators, faculty and staff; budgeting and expending funds; procedures related to construction of buildings; academic programs including degrees, course, admission, and graduation; promotion, tenure, and salary increments; athletic programs; student matters; research, grants, and contracts; parking, security, and other services; public relations.”⁴ Within any system of shared governance effective communication and adequate consensus among stakeholders are essential.

The proposed UVI Senate is a representative body composed of voting representatives from all sectors of the University community. The aim of the UVI Senate is to provide an opportunity for students, faculty, staff, and administrators to participate in shared governance within clearly defined processes.

C. Representation at UVI

The primary functional units of the University’s components will be the departments/schools/centers/divisions. At UVI faculty, staff and students will fulfill their roles in shared governance through formally established representative councils/association, committees and administrative channels. Shared governance permits all stakeholders- teaching and research faculty, students and staff --the opportunity to affect change in the academic program areas. Stakeholders will also impact the development and implementation of policies relevant to academic programs as well as express informed opinions on personnel issues pertaining to the academic program areas.

Faculty Representation. The University of the Virgin Islands Faculty Association is the actual body of full-time teaching and research faculty. The Faculty Executive Committee consists of officers and representatives elected from the general faculty and serves as the channel for input and feedback originating externally.

Administrative, Professional and Regular Staff Representation. The University of the Virgin Islands Staff Council (UVISC) is the official representative body for the Full-time Regular, Professional and Administrative Staff. The staff should have appropriate representation on matters affecting them. Input and feedback from staff should be conducted through their elected representatives as well as through established administrative channels.

Student Representation. The Student Government Association (SGA) is the official representative body of full-time and undergraduate students of the University. Undergraduate students should be represented on appropriate University committees and task forces related to the University. Input and feedback from students should be conducted through their elected representatives.

The elected representatives from each council/association are expected to share their responsibility of governance with their general membership. Elected representatives will be called on to identify members from their general membership to serve on University standing committees, ad hoc committees or task forces established by the president. The members of the respective committees will elect their chair.

Each council/association will develop and maintain a communication plan to ensure effective communication with their general membership and associate members. Provision will be made at the level of each council/association to provide for the inclusion of part-time faculty, part-time staff, contract staff, graduate students, and part-time students, (There are a number of mechanisms being considered to increase their input into these associations). Nevertheless, the officers of all councils/associations are encouraged to include their part-time cohorts in their communication plan.

D. UVI Senate

The UVI faculty, staff and student representative bodies shall each elect on an annual basis, **four** members to the UVI Senate for a total of **twelve** (12) voting members. The UVI Senate shall also include the President and Cabinet as non-voting members.

The Chair of the UVI Senate shall be elected from within its membership.

Four (4) members of the UVI Senate shall be elected by the Faculty Association.

Four (4) members of the UVI Senate shall be elected by the Staff Council.

Four (4) members of the UVI Senate shall be elected by the student government association(s).

The Chair of the UVI Senate shall serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms in the capacity of Chair [totaling two (2) terms] but may otherwise serve for a total period of three terms including those as Chair. Other members of the UVI Senate shall not serve more than three (3) consecutive terms [totaling three (3) terms].

A quorum of the UVI Senate shall consist of **fifty percent plus one** of the voting members.

E. Scope of Responsibilities and Functions

The UVI Senate is expected to play a pivotal role in the institution's decision-making process. The primary functions of the UVI Senate shall be governed by, and subject to the limitations imposed by federal laws, territorial laws, and mandates from the University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees. The UVI Senate shall provide broad based advice to the President and Cabinet on a broad range of issues including budgets, educational programs and standards, personnel policies, University community issues, strategic plans, facilities management and operation, and policies respecting faculty, staff and student as appropriate. This broad charge brings virtually all campus policy matters within the purview of the UVI Senate except those areas of responsibility delineated by the bylaws of the respective stakeholder group. (More specifically the section of the most recently approved Faculty By-Laws approved by the Board of Trustees regarding authority). Advisory to the President, the UVI Senate may pass recommendations on a wide range of issues. The faculty association, staff council, and student government association shall at all times maintain their role as advocates for their respective constituencies as stated in the applicable legislation, bylaws, or policy manual; and shall execute all functions as outlined in the applicable legislation, bylaws, or policy manual.

F. UVI Committees

The Senate shall set the guidelines under which University-wide/global policy committees shall be formed. Specific stakeholder group committees shall be formed in accordance with the bylaws of the relevant stakeholder group or the Faculty Policy Manual and bylaws as may be applicable. Committees shall be formed by the appropriate component as per stakeholder group and/or Senate guidelines for such committee(s).

G. UVI Senate Proceedings and Process

The proceedings of the UVI Senate are a matter of University record and disclosure of the proceedings is subject to federal, territorial and Board of Trustees policies. Proceedings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order

- i. Each meeting shall be preceded with an agenda published five (5) working days ahead of the meeting time.
- ii. Meeting times of the UVI Senate must be announced at the beginning of each academic year. All meetings shall be open to all stakeholders. Except for unpredictable events, the UVI Senate shall hold a minimum of four (4) meetings during the regular academic year.
- iii. The UVI Senate may meet with the University Officers and the chairs of the relevant University Standing Committees to discuss possible agenda items.
- iv. Issues or proposals shall first be discussed in the Senate, and may then sent to an ad hoc committee for discussion, review and report. The ad hoc committee shall report their

recommendations to the Senate for placement on the agenda of the Senate for debate, amendment, or approval.

v. All minutes of the UVI Senate and ad hoc committees shall be available to all electronically. The University will provide to the Senate support services as necessary to accomplish this.

vi. Cabinet shall discuss the advice and recommendations issued by the Senate in a timely manner and a response (with appropriate justification) shall be communicated to the Senate within five (5) days of the date of action on the item.

¹ [http://fp.arizona.edu/senate/Implementing Shared Governance - Best Practices. 3/21/2007](http://fp.arizona.edu/senate/Implementing_Shared_Governance_-_Best_Practices_3/21/2007)

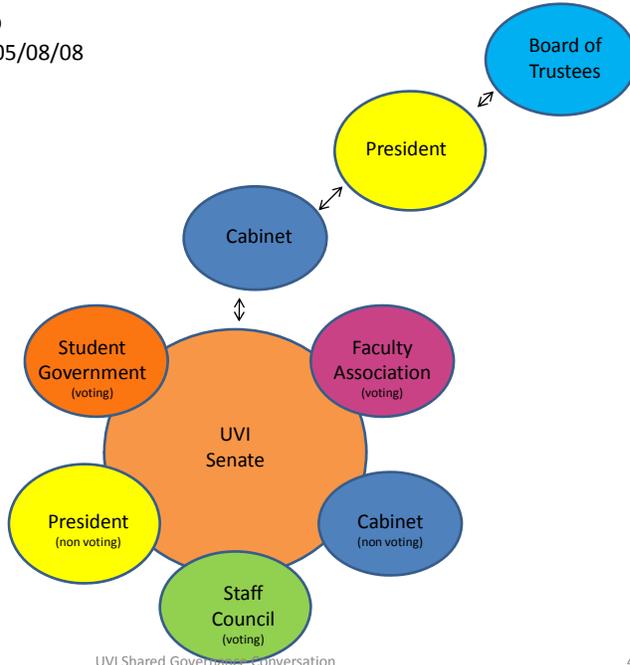
² (<http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2014/Governance-Decision-making-in-Colleges-Universities.html>)

³ (Lau, 1996)

⁴ (<http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2014/Governance-Decision-making-in-Colleges-Universities.html>).

UVI PROPOSED SHARED GOVERNANCE MODEL 05/08/08

This proposed model for shared governance at UVI is a modified version of the previous two diagrams based on additional input from University stakeholder groups. Arrows indicate decision making responsibilities and communication flow. The Senate shall consist of four representatives from each of the three University groups in addition to the president and cabinet.



5/8/2008

UVI Shared Governance Conversation

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