

CANDACE KANT:

SHARED GOVERNANCE AND FACULTY SENATE ROLE AT CCSN

I want to congratulate each of you on your election to this body, and welcome each of you to the 2006-2007 Faculty Senate. Your position in this Senate is one of the most important positions in the entire college. Your duties will affect this college not just in this moment, not just for this year, but for the lifetime of the college. They set a precedent for future decisions.

Faculty belong to a special class of the professions - they are one of the “Professions of the Robe” which includes ministers, judges, and professors. These three professions are related in that they are entrusted with the search for the truth.

Consequently, institutions of higher education are not structured, and do not function, in the way that business institutions function. There are many differences between them, but one key difference is that colleges and universities practice shared governance.

Shared governance means that decisions made in colleges and universities are rarely made unitarily at the top, by the CEO, and imposed on all employees. Instead, decisions are proposed, reviewed by several groups, including the faculty, and only after consensus is reached are they implemented. At CCSN, the voice of the faculty is expressed by the Faculty Senate.

Shared governance means that decision making includes a medley of voices. The emphasis given to each voice is based upon the impact of that particular decision. Emphasis is given to the faculty voice when such decisions directly or indirectly impact the heart of what the institution is all about, and the essence of the faculty’s function - serving the students. If it will, in any way, impact what goes on in the classroom, virtual or real, then the faculty voice must be heard. If it has direct impact, the faculty voice must be the loudest and given great weight. If it has indirect impact, the faculty voice must be among the loudest and their concerns taken into account.

Decisions regarding

- ✓ teaching and research,**
- ✓ the method of instruction,**
- ✓ the subject matter to be taught,**
- ✓ policies for admitting students,**
- ✓ standards of student competence in a discipline,**
- ✓ the maintenance of a suitable environment for learning, and**
- ✓ standards of faculty competence**

all bear directly on teaching, and the faculty should have primary authority over decisions about such matters - that is, the administration should concur with the faculty judgement except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail.

Decisions regarding

- ✓ long range objectives
- ✓ physical resources
- ✓ fiscal resources
- ✓ distribution of fund among various divisions
- ✓ presidential selection
- ✓ selection of administrators

also all have a powerful impact on teaching and research, and the decision making process must include the faculty, and its voice on these matters must be accorded great respect.

A governance system is a structure that allocates authority, and authority needs to be exercised if it is to have its intended effect. This means that faculty members must be willing to participate in the decision making processes over which a sound governance system gives them authority. Faculty members must accept their share of responsibility and do their share of the work. If they do not, authority will drift away from them, and since someone must exercise it, if members of the faculty do not, others will.

It is a sacrifice for you to spend your Friday afternoons in the Senate meeting. It is more work for you to contact your constituents, to keep them informed, to solicit their ideas and opinions. It takes much effort to research the issues. You won't always be rewarded for your efforts - occasionally a colleague, not understanding the big picture or having full information, might criticize you for your actions here. But rest assured - your colleagues and your institution recognize the importance and significance of your efforts, your sacrifices, and your work. What you do here, this year, will affect our college and our profession in ways none of us can possibly predict.

Have a wonderful and productive year.