

Shared Governance of Faculty, Administration, and Board Survey Presented to the Shared Governance Task Force: February 26, 2022

In May 2021, Board of Trustees Chair Grace Speights, in conversation with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair Arthur Wilson, called for a joint discussion about the meaning of shared governance at GW. A Shared Governance Task Force was appointed, made up of faculty, administrators, and trustees.

Part of the charge was to create a survey, completed by full-time faculty, administrators, and trustees, to be used as a diagnostic tool to “identify where there is agreement on the definition of shared governance; diagnose what is working well; and identify where there is disagreement among the parties related to the effectiveness of shared governance.” The survey was developed by the Task Force, incorporating many of the comments from faculty that were shared at the four Town Halls in early February. (See Slides 2-4 for more information about the survey and the research method used in the survey.) The slides that follow summarize the findings and were presented to the Task Force on February 26.

The response rate for the faculty was 41%, for administration 51%, and for the board 100%. A total of 712 people completed the survey. (See Slides 5 for information about the response rate and Slides 7, 8, and 9 for faculty demographics.)

One of the issues raised in both the Town Halls and in Task Force meetings was “who speaks for the faculty”—that is, which groups should represent faculty perspective to the administration, and which groups should be responsible for communicating to the administration once faculty make their recommendations (See Slides 11 and 12). These two questions were asked only of faculty.

Shared governance refers to the process whereby faculty, administration, and board work together to make informed decisions for the university. The purview of shared governance at GW comprises matters that are of concern to more than one college, school, or division, or to the faculty. Using many of the issues raised at the Town Halls, the Task Force identified 19 areas that faculty thought related to shared governance.

The first set of questions about decision-making (Slides 14-19) asked members in each of the groups to indicate the level of importance they placed on all 19 areas that can affect the academic mission of the university (Slides 14-15). Nine areas, in which 75% of at least one of the groups thought the issue was very or extremely importance, were identified and then ranked by order of importance for faculty (Slide 16), for administration (Slide 17), and board members (Slide 18). Slide 19 shows differences among the three groups in terms of what each group considers extremely important.

The second set of questions about decision-making attempts to understand which group the faculty, administration, and board think should take primary responsibility for making decisions or recommendations in the respective issue that affect the university’s academic mission (Slides

21-34). Their choices included faculty, administration, board or a joint effort in taking the lead. (Some respondents noted that the “joint responsibility” category was ambiguous: Did joint responsibility include areas where only 2 groups should share responsibility?) The left column of Slide 21 lists the areas of agreement, whereby all three groups align in which group(s) should take primary responsibility for the issue. The consensus for the lead group is in parentheses. The right column lists the areas of differences whereby there is no consensus among the three groups about which group should have primary responsibility for the issue.

The process for selecting the items of agreement and differences about which group(s) should take primary responsibility (Slide 21) is as follows. Each area of shared governance was reviewed to see which group(s) should take primary responsibility for decisions or recommendations for the particular area. Those areas for which the majority of members in each group selected the same group(s) to take the lead were considered in agreement (Slide 22). Those areas in which a majority of each group indicated different group(s) having primary responsibility were considered to have differing views (Slide 23). Slides 25-34 illustrate the similarities and differences about which group should take primary responsibility for the nine areas in which at least 75% of one group thought the issue was very or extremely important (Slide 16).

The next set of questions address what different components of shared governance (decision-making, information sharing, and roles and responsibilities) should look like in the future. The group differences in levels of importance for each component show where the three groups align and differ (Slides 36-38).

Another purpose of the survey was to identify methods to improve communication among the parties directly involved in shared governance and with the faculty at large. The list of methods included in the survey were suggested by faculty at the Town Halls. Each group was asked to indicate the level of effectiveness of the method (Slides 41-42).