

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**FACULTY SENATE SESSION ON SHARED GOVERNANCE**  
**August 29, 2022**

The notes from each group were synthesized by discussion topic on pages 2 (dialogue), 3 (transparency), and 4 (need) of this document. Page 5 is a summary of what groups said they learned from this session. See accompanying PowerPoint for topic prompts.

These summaries were then synthesized by E. Schussler (a qualitative researcher), who created five overall findings that resonated in conversation throughout the session.

This document was then reviewed by the Faculty Senate Leadership Team to assure that it reflected the discussions we had that day.

**1. Create more opportunities for cross-campus conversations**

- Talking with other faculty and administrators clarifies that we share many values, but our perspectives and needs can be very different
- Gathering in groups that cut across the campus hierarchy (e.g. staff, faculty, students, etc.) to share ideas will help us come to common understandings about our work
- We need authentic dialogue and not fear disagreements and hard conversations

**2. Work together to articulate our shared mission and to prioritize campus needs and efforts**

- Groups across campus should talk and set yearly institutional goals to guide campus efforts
- These goals can be used to consider how resources should be distributed and efforts prioritized
- This would give us a common set of values and build trust in one another

**3. Incentivize and encourage understanding of, and engagement in, shared governance**

- We all need a better understanding of who makes what decisions at UT and how our voice is used in those decisions
- We need to make it easier for individuals from across campus to participate in shared governance by giving them the time and/or incentive to engage as appropriate in this service
- We need to build an institutional culture that values this engagement

**4. Clarify institutional processes and decision-making**

- We often don't know what is going on at the institution; it is too big, too complex, and lacks effective internal communication strategies to keep everyone informed
- There is unequal access to information at the institution
- People don't know who to contact about campus initiatives
- How decisions are made is unclear and why these efforts are being initiated is not always known or understood
- Participants suggested a dashboard or one stop for faculty to provide basic information about institutional efforts, points of contact, timelines for change, etc.

**5. Explicate the use of data and feedback on campus**

- Participants expressed frustration about filling out surveys or providing feedback and then having little understanding of how these data were used
- This made people feel like their voice does not matter; like their efforts are not valued
- There is a desire for clarity about how data are collected and used to inform campus decisions

## **Dialogue (Communication takes time, but needs to be prioritized)**

### **PEOPLE**

- There needs to be more interaction between admin / students (UG and Grad) / staff / faculty
- Students (UG and Grad) often feel left out of the information loop
- Need to know more about who to contact for questions on campus (other staff, admin, etc.)
- Create a website with information on shared governance; explain who makes which decisions on campus and how faculty contribute to shared governance
- More interactions with Deans by faculty, staff, students
- There is a perception of hierarchy; a feeling you can't talk with admin before going up the chain of command. This hierarchy reinforces inadequate information sharing

### **PLACES**

- Come to where faculty are for meetings; leverage existing meetings versus creating new ones
  - Come to department meetings; college meetings
- Student / faculty leader assemblies; town halls; open office hours with chancellor and provost
- Faculty Senate Caucus meetings with admin (Deans)
- Have an open time in class schedule for meetings

### **MODES**

- Deans / dept heads not disseminating information down to faculty
  - No prioritizing of information based on what folks need to know and often not at the level of detail needed
  - Not just how to communicate, but WHAT to communicate
- Decisions often presented without faculty feeling they had input
- Information not easily digestible; take cue from news sources about new modes of delivery
- Need a shared intranet for information
- Both formal and informal modes of conversation

### **HOW**

- More dialogue; more two-way conversation; more direct and honest communication
  - Less one-way dissemination of good news; acknowledge issues and problems
  - More small group conversation
  - Have the courage to engage in hard conversations
  - Disagreements don't necessarily mean broken trust
  - Explain reasoning for decisions, explain how faculty feedback was used (trust faculty feedback)
- Admin and faculty work together to prioritize needs for campus
  - Faculty need to feel they have a stake in the mission too; need a shared understanding of the mission; top down and bottom up
  - Faculty want to feel like their time, energy, advice, and expertise are valued
  - Faculty need to know admin has their backs on negative TN laws
  - Meetings with clear goals and clear needs
- Provide information and data to frame conversations
- Faculty fellows for communication in colleges / provost office
- Faculty Senate news feed

### **WHY**

- Faculty engage via faculty senate but this work is not incentivized despite how critical it is
- No reward for doing service / shared governance work; certainly none for NTT faculty
- Shared governance has to be active to work, so how do we get people to do it?

## **Transparency (\*need to define transparency)**

### **GAPS IN INFORMATION BETWEEN**

- Faculty and students
- Faculty in different colleges
- Unequal access to information because of silos

### **HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE**

- Need to know more about HOW decisions are made, what the process is
- We all need to better understand how the institution operates
- Put a decision-making tree on the web for each process we are going through – be clear about who is involved, who receives feedback, and how they process and use that feedback
- Clarifying pathways for getting things done

### **GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING**

- No one knows how to get data, where it comes from, how it is being used to make decisions
- People don't understand basic information like budget model and its impacts on curriculum; curriculum approval, etc.
- Need to know what committees are out there and what is being discussed
- Need to know where changes originate from and why we are making those changes
- Need rationale for decisions
- Need a "one stop" source of information for faculty – shows processes and pathways, who does what, who to call, etc.
- Sharing of best practices across units
- Use of empty words to explain things – agility – faculty don't know what this means
- How to move information horizontally – from one college to another
- Just because faculty serve on committees doesn't mean we are sharing this information and understand what is going on institutionally – we need a big picture

### **GAPS IN ROLES AND PERSPECTIVES**

- We don't know roles and responsibilities of key players in admin
- We all have different priorities, so how do we find common ground in our discussions – we don't really understand each other's points of view
- We all have different perspectives and needs for information at different times; things urgent to one group are not urgent to another
- Different narratives from admin / faculty / staff
- We need to know more about other colleges – hold college open houses for other units?
- Duplication of effort across campus because of lack of communication (committees and task forces doing same thing)
- Adopt a service mindset for internal customers / stakeholders
  - OIT is a good model for this

### **GAPS IN AUTHENTICITY**

- Need to know admin will stand up against Legislature
- Want to hear authentic explanations, not politically correct answers
- Be clear about what can and cannot be shared with us and why
- We need to know about crises and issues, but also know who is dealing with them
- Think about our mission in absence of politics
- More info on what government relations is up to

## **Needs**

### **WHAT WE NEED**

- Time for DEI work and to balance all our responsibilities; workload issues are huge
- More staff to help faculty workload
- Basic needs for students – food, housing, parking
- Pay for GTAs so we can recruit students, higher pay for faculty for retention, salary compression issues, compensation for extra workload
- Space on campus for teaching and offices, housing concerns for faculty, grad students, visiting scholars
- Faculty social space
- Understanding of how everyone's position fits into larger function of campus
- Reassurances about academic freedom, college reorganization, how we are going to manage enrollment growth
- Communication
  - Way to connect in good faith and talk about tough issues
  - Admin needs to hear from a more broad-based group of faculty
  - Need to listen from the bottom up
  - Ongoing open dialogue
  - Clarify paths of communication
  - Communication that moves both vertically and horizontally across organization
  - More wellness Wednesday conversations
  - Need to build relationships across layers of institution

### **IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES**

- Ask people what they need!
- Working group across university roles to prioritize strategies
- Align the strategic plan with daily needs and decisions
- Identify top priorities for the year and work together on them
- Evaluate resources and expenditures based on our shared core mission
- Who is receiving the least and most resources and why – does it align with our values?
- Do our hires reflect our institutional mission?
- We all need to listen to each other; have empathy
- We need to know more about the constraints on resources
- It's not about wants, it is about needs. But whose needs matter?
- What are our shared core values that transcend the different lenses we use every day?

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Make issues and discussions as public as possible
- Need to be honest about positive and negative things
- Clarify who makes the decisions on things like space and how are they accountable to those folks
- More clarity on how feedback is used after meetings / survey data, etc.
- Documentation of data, process, etc.

## **TAKE HOMES – what each group said they learned from the session**

“not a strategic vision, but a shared mission”

- Have admin talk about what they will take from this session and what they will DO
- Be careful we aren't biting off more than we can chew with this enrollment growth

### How to meet workload challenges

- Lots of burnout right now all around
- Need to recognize that service can build a positive campus culture, yet many faculty do not feel they have time to participate or are not recognized for this work

### We can and should work together

- Both faculty and admin are committed to the institution, but through different lenses
- Faculty and staff are on the same team and are good people!
- We have to work together, but it is not simple; we have too many external forces working against us to fight internally

### Knowledge gaps

- Large initiatives not consistently known across campus
- So much is going on that we don't know about
- Processes seem too complicated and need to be simplified
- Everyone struggles with figuring out the process of moving ideas forward; who to contact
- Large discrepancy between departments and colleges on many issues

### Communication

- Communication is a big, complex issue we need to figure out
- Large institutions are complex; unintended consequences happen
- Different colleges have different communication structures
- Too many information gaps and not enough time and people to fix them all
- It is important to have group conversations to share information, discuss challenges, and propose solutions; discuss a shared mission
- Talking is cathartic and brings a sense of positivity
- Working groups of faculty and admin can reach a shared vision