

University of Kentucky University Senate

Resolution on Principles of Shared Governance, April 8, 2024

Whereas, shared governance is a foundational core value of the University of Kentucky; shared decision-making roles among faculty, staff, students, and administrators are what makes us strong, resilient, innovative, and true to our shared values and purpose;

Whereas, the President has proposed principles to guide major changes to the University's Governing Regulations (Final Draft of Principles for Campus Review, March 27, 2024);

Whereas, the President's proposed principles remove all existing Board delegations that currently empower the University Senate to decide issues of educational policy; concentrates all such *decisional power* instead in the Board alone; concentrates all *advisory power* in the Office of the President; divides faculty, staff, and students into separate, competing entities, undermining the sharing of expertise; and pushes decision-making down into colleges, which weakens university coherence and eliminates the important mechanisms that keep us informed about the broader university climate, community, and curricula;

Whereas, the University Senate has expressed serious concerns about both the process and substance of the proposed changes to the governance structure at the University in the form of two previous Resolutions; in conversation with the President at the March University Senate meeting; and in small group sessions the President has held with Senate Council leadership;

Whereas, the concerns and suggestions expressed to the President in these forums have not been addressed nor integrated into the proposed principles for reforming the governance system, nor has the University Senate or Senate Council been engaged as true partners to collaborate and build consensus around how to protect the best of our shared governance structure while making changes to improve our processes and constituent engagement;

Whereas, the University Senate currently holds authority delegated by the Board to determine educational policy and is prepared to offer compromise principles of shared governance for the Board's consideration that will support the educational mission of the university and strengthen our shared governance structure;

Be it resolved that, without a pause in the process and true partner collaboration with the elected representatives of the University Senate, the University Senate opposes the President's proposed principles for shared governance, and has no confidence that his proposed changes are in the best long-term interests of the University or the Commonwealth;

And be it further resolved that the following **alternative principles for changes to shared governance** that better align with best practices, foster trust and collaboration, and create a stronger university community that can be agile in a changing educational landscape, and best

respond to the needs of our university community and the Commonwealth of Kentucky be adopted;

And be it finally resolved that any changes to the University's Governing Regulations must be paused to allow for meaningful engagement from the University Senate, the Staff Senate, and the Student Government Association, and that all three bodies shall have the opportunity to vote to indicate their support for or opposition to any proposed changes prior to their presentation to the Board of Trustees.

Principle 1: On Authority

We affirm that the Board of Trustees has the ultimate fiduciary and decision-making authority over the institution, as dictated by state law and our own regulations. However, it is best that the Board empowers the University Senate to make educational policy decisions based on its existing and potentially expanded expertise. With specific expertise in curriculum and course design policy, as well as tenure and promotion policy, and other policy decisions affecting the academic and educational life of the university, the University Senate should be empowered by the Board to decide policy around educational matters. We affirm that the Board has the authority to revise the policy decisions of the University Senate if needed, based on its legal authority granted by the state, in situations where its fiduciary responsibilities and its responsibility to ensure sustainability and excellence of the institution are compromised.

Principle 2: On Constituent Groups

We fully support proposed changes to the advisory capacity of the Staff Senate and Student Government Association. We favor changes to the definitions of these bodies in the Governing Regulations that expand the breadth of areas on which they will be consulted. These constituencies deserve to have a meaningful say in matters that impact their positions and work experience at the University.

The University Senate, however, strongly opposes a change to its structure that would eliminate representation by students and administrators. Siloing faculty, staff, students, and administrators within their own competing organizations is counterproductive to our goals and stymies meaningful collaborative discourses. The President's proposal to limit the faculty, staff, and student groups to advisory roles to the President would diminish the capacity of all three groups to influence decisions and is not consistent with the principles of shared governance. A better alternative is to expand the University Senate to have a greater role for all stakeholders within the university: elected members from faculty, staff, students, and administrators. The University Senate must then collectively create better mechanisms for including and engaging staff, students, and administrators on this expanded University Senate.

Principle 3: On the President's Council and Senate Council

We affirm that the President may develop any advisory board he wishes, and that there is value in having an advisory body with equal member representation from each of the four constituencies (faculty, staff, students, administrators). We recommend that each constituency be empowered to elect their own members to represent them on any such body. Elected representation provides a clear pathway for constituents to express their input and increases the probability that differing viewpoints will lead to better decisions. Because we favor retaining the University Senate's decisional authority over educational policy and expanding its membership, we are also open to expanding membership of its executive body, the Senate Council, to include, for example, voting administrators and staff.

Principle 4: On Local Authority

We propose maintaining the current system of checks and balances over curricular matters across the University. The mission of the University Senate has always been to make the university stronger by pooling our collective expertise and learning from each other. There are tremendous benefits to having our curricula and programs subjected to careful analyses and consideration by a wide range of peers with a broad range of expertise. By siloing decisions within colleges, we decrease communication and sharing of expertise. This also increases the perspective that colleges are in competition with each other, rather than the perspective that we are units working in collaboration towards a greater purpose. We are open to discussion of moving some aspects of educational policy currently residing in the Senate to the colleges, but the President's proposal would destroy university coherence and eliminate the key mechanisms that keep us informed on the broader university climate, community, and curricula. Further, moving all adjudication power regarding disputes between colleges to the Provost's office, with only a consultation role for the proposed Faculty Senate, concentrates too much power in one office and simultaneously eliminates the voices of staff and students in such matters.

We direct our Chair of the University Senate, the President of the University of Kentucky, to forward a copy of this resolution to the Board of Trustees.