

Notes from Shared Governance Discussions
January 23, 2007 and January 30, 2007, 12:00-12:52 p.m.

Opening comments by Faculty Chair Marty Ligare:

Faculty Chair Marty Ligare began by reminding everyone that these two Tuesday meetings are not formal faculty meetings. The purpose of these sessions is to identify issues so that we can set priorities for our overall governance reviews to address; we will not be determining solutions or even potential solutions at this point. This meeting is meant to be a dialogue: at some points we will assure (is this the right word?) that both faculty and administrators are encouraged to speak.

The Middle States Evaluation Team identified governance issues as something that Bucknell could improve in terms of both effectiveness and efficiency. Both the Board of Trustees and the faculty agreed that changes needed to be made (when did they agree to this? Or are you referring to the Peeler report?). An ad hoc committee of the Faculty in 2004-05 raised some specific issues, most of which the faculty has since addressed and some of which Faculty Council intends to have us address forthwith: for example, we will be addressing the notion of increasing the quorum at the first February meeting (February 13); at some point in the future, we will address such things as a standing committee on ISR; further, we should address the charges of all committees, as well as whether the overall committee structure and committees' internal structures are appropriate. An external review team will help the faculty consider its governance system later this Spring (later is right, but Spring? We'll see.).

Opening comments by University President Brian Mitchell:

President Brian Mitchell's opening comments are contained in the appendix to these notes. They include his list of 15 questions that he would like to see our governance review address, largely because he believes the trustees and Middle States are interested in our addressing them. (This sentence is awkward)

The meaning of shared governance

Professor Ligare noted that the faculty's role in university governance at Bucknell includes participation in both university committees and faculty committees. Only the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure (CAFT) comprises solely faculty and meets without administrators present; Faculty Council is similarly comprised, but in addition to its private meetings, it also meets as part of University Council, which includes administrators and students. All other committees involving faculty are university committees (curriculum committee is not a university-wide committee; it's a college committee—it does have a shared governance structure, however), which include administrative and student members. Thus, the vast majority of Bucknell's committees have a shared governance structure.

Professor Ligare suggested that everyone read the AAUP statement on governance as background. He provided the following URLs:

- AAUP home page: <http://www.aaup.org/aaup>
- AAUP "Red Book", a.k.a. "Policies and Documents" (includes AAUP 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities):
<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/>
- AAUP Governance of Colleges and Universities page:
<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issued/governance/>
(This page has a link to a Resources on Governance page:
<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issued/governance/gov-resources.htm>)

President Mitchell commented that the Association of Governing Boards (AGB), similar to the AAUP but for Trustees, has similar documentation.

Goals for these governance meetings

In response to Professor Mike Prince's question about the goals of these shared governance meetings, Professor Ligare replied that, first, we want to identify issues that are holding us back from fulfilling our goals as educators and holding the university as a whole back. We want to know what everyone's concerns are so that we don't end up working on issues that turn out not to be of concern to important stakeholders; rather than simply making inferences, speculating, or guessing about what concerns people have, we hope to get things out on the table instead. Second, identifying our governance issues will enable us to respond appropriately to Middle States. Third, the issues we identify in these meetings will help us provide focus for the external review. And fourth, after we have identified and then addressed our governance concerns, we can move on and focus more effectively on the campaign.

Dr. Jerry Rackoff noted, "Over time, systems do not spontaneously simplify"; instead, they build up "baggage," and the system becomes complex and cumbersome. Periodic reviews of complex organizational systems enable those within them to avoid such awkwardness. Thus, periodic reviews of governance are entirely appropriate, regardless of what Middle States suggests. A summary of Dr. Rackoff's comments is included in the Appendix to these notes.

Governance crisis?

Professor Mike Payne expressed concern that, MS's judgment that the faculty doesn't understand shared governance sounds like a crisis rather than a routine or low-level concern. Nevertheless, he observed that in his decades at Bucknell, the university has continually addressed questions of governance. In fact, he views the successful evolution and adaptation of Bucknell's shared governance system as a positive outcome.

Professor Ben Marsh said that he believes we do have a crisis of governance, but the crisis is that the President and administration don't appreciate the value of Bucknell's governance system, which has served us well for decades. Although reviewing governance is appropriate, making dramatic changes in the institution's authority relationships is not appropriate.

Professor Mike Prince said that he does not think there is a faculty governance crisis, but we need to talk about other issues. He supported the President's move to highlight governance and encouraged us to talk about the issue of trust and communication. Some things that help trust can be operationalized, but others can't. Transparency is one way to operationalize things. For example, more faculty should attend trustees' meetings.

President Mitchell does not think this is a crisis either: it's just a problem that needs to be put on the table, addressed, and put to bed. A complete review of university governance conducted over the next 12-18 months will include reviewing everything from the constitution forward.

Shared governance structures

Faculty Chair Marty Ligare reminded the faculty that one of the Peeler Report recommendations was to look at the charge of the Faculty Council, which could facilitate high-level decision making in a timely manner. Another option is that to establish a "cabinet" comprising committee chairs as a sort of executive committee.

Professor Elizabeth Durden asked if there are models for shared governance structures that we could consider using. Professor Ligare again suggested that some data on shared governance was collected by the Peeler committee. They suggested that we could consider establishing Faculty Senate; or we could consider just fixing issues associated with our current structure rather than adopting a whole new structure.

Committee operations and inter-committee communications

Professor and Faculty Chair Marty Ligare announced that Faculty Council sent out a request to committee chairs for feedback about their committees and shared governance. Because the Faculty Council welcomes feedback from faculty with expertise in particular committees (i.e., people who have served on a committee previously but do not sit on it at present), the request to committee chairs will be copied to the entire faculty.

Professor Ben Marsh said that he appreciated the agenda but wishes it had included some opportunities for identifying things that work well, not just issues of concern. One of the strengths of Bucknell's committee system is that we can create compromise within the committees, thereby creating greater collegiality. People in the committees become invested in the decisions they are making. Committees allow open, trusting negotiation, and they allow dispersion of authority.

Professor Carl Milofsky suggested that we should try to be more specific regarding individual committees. We should focus on shared governance committees that are having problems separately from shared governance committees that work reasonably well. He indicated that we should also identify areas of the university that faculty should be providing input on; specifically, changes in athletics do end up affecting faculty, even though the university tends to think that athletics don't affect academics.

President Mitchell noted (he stated this, but "noted" suggests that it is true) that better communication among committees is needed. For example, when the Committee on Staff Planning decided to move forward with the five-course load, Mitchell said (important because it did communicate in a timely way) it did not communicate timely with the Committee on Planning and Budget. CPB therefore didn't have enough time to adequately incorporate the costs of the five-course load into the budget.

Professor Peter Kresl said that the contention that faculty were responsible for CSP's failure to communicate with CPB regarding the five-course load is wrong: one of the reasons we have senior administrators on both committees is to facilitate communication. President Mitchell said that he doesn't believe that the administrators on the various committees have been officially charged with handling communications: if that is part of their role, it should be clarified.

Provost DeCredico, who sits on CSP, noted that the Provost is not given specific authorities or responsibilities on any committees (although deans are); so the Provost's roles should be clarified as well.

Professor Marge Kastner noted that the *Faculty Handbook* details responsibilities of the faculty, some of which are to be handled by committees. She pointed at that, at this point, no mechanism exists for providing feedback to committees on their performance, so Professor Kastner suggests that the governance review should deal with this issue.

Other communications and cultural issues

Professor Ligare notes that some inappropriate Board-faculty communication took place in the past, but that now we should focus on increasing and improving Board-faculty communications so that the Board has greater understanding of how the faculty have made important decisions, such as the allocation of faculty positions for next year.

President Mitchell indicated that faculty members sit on some board committees, and faculty representatives go to open Board meetings.

President Mitchell also acknowledged that, in order to facilitate more efficient and effective communication, he has been attempting to dismantle the many fiefdoms that exist throughout the administration.

Professor Bill Flack commented that faculty members participated in a survey last Fall but that results have not yet been reported; he expressed the feeling that such things should be more timely. Dr. Jerry Rackoff said that the results of the campus climate survey should be available shortly.

Professor Janice Mann suggested that we can't legislate communication through a committee structure. Good communication is attitudinal, therefore we need to work on our overall attitude instead of focusing all our efforts on getting the words on paper right. (Didn't she also suggest that it is clear that people who sit on both committees are expected to use their knowledge from one committee to inform the discussion in the other committee? Didn't Kresl also suggest this?)

Also along these lines, Professor Jerry Mead commented that much of the "community feel" of Bucknell has dissipated over the course of the 24 years he has been at the university. He notes that he often dined at the Refectory with the President or a dean when he first arrived, yet this no longer happens. Professor Mead noted that he felt that it was emblematic of the problem Bucknell faces: some sort of shared community must exist in order to have truly effective shared governance.

BSG President Sarah Cummings noted that Professor Mann's comment (which comment? I think you omitted the student comment) was particularly on-target from a student's perspective: greater trust, communication, and participation are key to making better decisions for the university as a whole. Students would like to be increasingly involved in governance in the future.

Appropriate issues for faculty to address

President Mitchell said he would like to see the faculty emphasize the curriculum more: faculty have spent too much time on items not directly related to their roles as teacher-scholars, such as dining services and merit scholarships. Similarly, the trustees had no clear focus when President Mitchell arrived; he has helped them identify appropriate levels and types of concerns and has assured them that lower level issues would be handled by the administration.

Professor George Exner offered six questions we should address regarding the appropriate extent to which faculty views carry weight in university decisions. These are included in the appendix to these notes.

University operates year-'round...

In his fifteen questions, the President mentioned his concerns about the timeliness of faculty action. In response to a question about this from a faculty member, the President expressed concern that the university as a whole needs to be able to operate on a 12-month schedule, yet faculty committees only make decisions about nine months a year.

Appendix

President Brian C. Mitchell
Comments to Special Faculty Meeting on Governance
January 23, 2007

I want to start by saying that I appreciate the work that has been done lately on the faculty aspect of University governance. In particular, I want to thank the Faculty Council for their very good and insightful work with Wayne Bromfield in putting this agenda together.

Marty, Pam (Gorkin), Tammy (Hiller) and I met yesterday with Wayne Bromfield to speak a bit about today. If we have a productive conversation today, as I expect we will, we will have set the stage for the external reviewers and for a good and timely discussion on governance. With all the time that has been put so far into University governance, I propose that we make the most of our time today and next week.

I have been asked to offer candid and forthright comment, by folks like Tammy Hiller and Michael Prince, which I am fully prepared and eager to do.

Let's start with a brief prefatory comment. There has been a question raised by Middle States about University governance for at least 10 years, since the middle 1990s. My view is that the Middle States concerns have been consistent throughout this time. These are facts which are not subject to interpretation as facts. Further, the Middle States review team signed off as a group on the chair's findings, as did the Middle States program officer, its staff, its executive director, and the entire Middle States Board.

In addition, the University's Board of Trustees agreed with the Middle States position and, as the new president, I found myself in a position of mediating a dispute after the fact for which I was not present and yet upon which I am often called to comment. I am aware that, like it or not, I have inherited this problem.

Let's start with the issue of governance review. This cannot be an issue purely of faculty governance. It is an issue of University governance. The administration is looking at how we administer . . . how we govern. I have reorganized in some places and will continue to do my best to have the administration become more effective, efficient, and relevant as an important component in governance. The trustees have looked at their role in governance and have been doing so since before I arrived 2 ½ years ago. As faculty, you are not being asked to do anything that other groups have not also been doing and that has been required by Middle States for something approaching 15 years. The difference is that this president supports the trustees'

efforts to call the question. I submit that you should too. Let's address it and get it off the table. And then, let's move on.

The faculty have looked at some recommendations in the Peeler Report but are only now beginning to gear up for an external review. The most important point is that we need a University-wide review with a commitment to assessment and evaluation on an ongoing basis from everyone.

What should be our goal? I believe that we have a critical responsibility. It is my hope that my successors will be better University presidents than their predecessors, including me. With the best interests of this University at heart, we must commit as a faculty to a faculty that is each year better than we are. We can debate what that means, and should, but we must commit to ongoing, sustainable excellence that brings the very best teacher-scholars to this University. And, as Pam Gorkin pointed out quite accurately to me yesterday, it should be organic and evolutionary whenever possible as the bar shifts, as Bucknell evolves. But, we must move on it.

So, then, what are the areas the trustees and Middle States will look to when assessing the completeness of a faculty assessment of faculty governance? My guess is the following, which I will phrase as questions. I do so with your understanding, appreciation and encouragement when I support the raising of these questions and the need to answer them.

1. What is the charge to the chair, faculty council, faculty committees, and University committees? How can their respective missions be defined more clearly?
2. How do University committees differ from faculty committees and are the committees operating efficiently and with some relationship to one another?
3. If the faculty have primacy in development of the academic program -- as they do and should, working with the provost and senior academic affairs administration -- what does this mean and how can faculty best focus their efforts on the academic program?
4. Do the findings of the Peeler Report represent the last word or, now that several years have passed, should we look at the report and also look beyond it to the conditions and circumstances that we face today?
5. Can the faculty focus on two to three areas each year, discuss these areas and reach closure? If the faculty determine that we need to focus on globalization, for example, how can we set the broad policy parameters that define the academic program in place in a timely fashion?
6. What is the annual focus of faculty governance, who provides it, and how does it support a coherent view of faculty aspirations, *The Plan for Bucknell*, and the University's comprehensive campaign?
7. What is the role of the provost and the president in tenure and promotion? Are the right mechanisms in place and will we accept careful and judicious applications of them maturely and collegially as we ultimately must if the present system is to work? Within this context, incidentally, we must take aggressive steps to protect individuals in the tenure pipeline as the bar shifts and standards change for the new hires who are not yet in the pipeline.
8. If the increase in attendance at faculty meetings is due primarily to the presence of an increased number of young, untenured faculty, what does that say about the current

organization of faculty meetings? With 35-40 new faculty hired at a minimum, is it time to look at alternative forms of collective governance?

9. How can we meet a full agenda and complete deliberation on a timely basis?
10. How does the administration best seek counsel and advice from the faculty throughout 12 months of administration?
11. How do we achieve transparency in communication in a manner that is civil and respectful to all parties?
12. How can a broader group of voices be heard at faculty meetings without disrupting the agenda?
13. How can we encourage a greater willingness of faculty to serve and to understand that good faculty governance is something that should be important to them and reward their work accordingly?
14. What changes must be made to the Faculty Handbook and how can they be done in a timely fashion?
15. How consistent is faculty governance at Bucknell with peer and aspirants institutions, AAUP guidelines, and AGB (Association of Governing Boards) guidelines?

These are some questions that I have and I'll be happy to make them available. There may be others.

As I have said to Marty Ligare, it is critical that we face the need to have a discussion; look beyond Bucknell to where we might find some solutions; respect but not be tied in lock step to history, when older compromises may have less relevance as Bucknell changes; and come to decisions that end the battles that have been waged since before any of us were here and in a public manner that has hurt the reputation of this great place.

I don't relish these discussions but I trust that we can approach them collegially to reach important decisions on University-wide governance. For Bucknell to become what it can be and to reach common aspirations of excellence, we don't have a choice. So, I for one am eager to have the discussions that I don't especially enjoy so that we can end them and get on to the more interesting effort to build programs, improve pedagogy, enhance teaching and research, and find the resources that we need.

You now have my first thoughts. Thanks.

Dr. Jerry Rackoff
Comments to Special Faculty Meeting on Governance
January 23, 2007

First Point

People who are experts in systems (whether computer or governance systems) share a common wisdom: over time, systems do not spontaneously simplify. ALL systems grow by a process of accretion and grow gradually more complex and cumbersome over time. This is not only an issue of "efficiency;" systems also accumulate historical "baggage" in the form of negotiated

compromises that pre-date many of our current faculty. The result is a clouding of mutual understandings that need to be renegotiated and documented.

Second Point

We have not been singled out by Middle States for some special, punitive treatment. Most institutions, on a cycle of no longer than a decade at most, must undertake a thorough-going review of their governance structure to address the problem of governance accretion.

In the preparation of our governance report to MSA, I conducted an informal survey of colleagues at other institutions and found that governance reviews have been conducted within the last few years by Bard, Bates, Birmingham Southern, Boston U, Brown U, Agnes Scott, Claremont McKenna, College of the Holy Cross, Earlham, Lehigh, Oberlin. Villanova's review was the most distant – 10 years ago.

I ask that you forget about the fact that Middle States has required us to conduct a governance review. The time is right to conduct this kind of review for ourselves.

Third Point

A report some years ago by the Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis provided what I believe is the best agenda for a governance review. It listed five strategies for enhancing governance:

1. Delineating and documenting responsibilities
 - a. What is exclusively in the domain of the faculty (faculty governance)?
 - b. What domains require faculty participation in broader institutional issues (shared governance)?
2. Articulating a shared meaning of governance
3. Utilizing multiple decision-making venues
4. Communicating
5. Creating the conditions for trust

Fourth Point

A central conclusion of Ronald Ehrenberg's 2004 book, "Governing Academia," is that there is no one ideal form of governance for all institutions. We have considerable latitude in deciding what is right for us.

Fifth and Final Point

On the other hand, what is common or best practice at other institutions DOES MATTER.

We should not be guilty of the "not invented here" syndrome. If a series of natural laboratories at other institutions have developed good models of generally accepted best practice, we should certainly evaluate them carefully for their applicability at Bucknell.

We also do not live in a vacuum. When institutions deviate too widely from the mainstream of governance practice, this fact quickly becomes common knowledge in the educational marketplace. The perception that Bucknell is somehow idiosyncratic can hinder the recruitment of talented faculty and administrative leadership—even if the system works.

Professor George Exner
Comments to Special Faculty Meeting on Governance
January 23, 2007

I would like to see us address the basic question, "To what extent should the faculty voice carry weight in decisions about"....

1. Preferential (early) registration for athletes?
2. Campus building construction? (Do we need a new classroom building more than we do the A frame?)
3. Hiring procedures and decisions, including...
 - a) The procedures to be followed for hiring of a president? provost? dean?
 - b) The outcome of hiring a president? provost? dean?
4. The development of the University's mission statement (e.g., the "premiere undergraduate experience" as opposed to the "premiere undergraduate education)?
5. Policies and benefits for dining service workers?
6. The structure of certain scholarships?

For example, when originally proposed, athletic scholarships for men's and women's basketball would surely be awarded equally because of NCAA regulations. Thus, even if disparate funding arrives, there is an automatic balance. But there is no external force to require that the arts/music scholarships originally proposed as coupled with athletic ones must be awarded in balance with the athletic ones, and this was a worry at the time. It turned out to be a justified one: the athletic scholarships were quickly fully funded, and awarded, while (some of) the arts/music ones were not (at least for a time - I don't know their present status). An alternative model would have had donations to a common pool, from which scholarships were awarded, in the agreed upon balance, as funding became available. (So, for example, if the balance were 1/1/1 men's athletics/women's athletics/music/arts, and 3 basketball scholarships for men and three for women were needed, but only enough money for 8 scholarships was available, there would be two men's, two women's, two music, and two arts, as opposed to the sort of 3/3/1/1 that I understand actually happened.) Again, just for emphasis, the question is not what is the right thing to do, but what is the weight of faculty voice on the question.