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REAFFIRMING
THE
VALUE
OF
SHAR
GOVERNANCE

BY LARRY G. GERBER

THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AN INCREASINGLY heated debate has been taking place over the role of presidents, boards of trustees, and faculty in the governance of institutions of higher learning. Economic and political pressures on colleges and universities have intensified over the last several years, resulting in calls from a variety of sources for stronger leadership and more efficient administration.

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BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Last year a special commission of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) issued a widely publicized report entitled "Renewing the Academic Presidency: Stronger Leadership for Tougher Times." The AGB report represents an important, though far from fully satisfactory, response to this ongoing debate. While making a number of useful recommendations, the report is equivocal in its support for the traditions of shared governance that have contributed to making American higher education the envy of the rest of the world. In fact, the greatest shortcoming of the report is its implicit call for colleges and universities to make greater use of a corporate model of management that is already coming under increasing criticism in the business world and that has only limited relevance for academia.

The twenty-two member Commission on the Academic Presidency that authored the report was chaired by former Virginia governor Gerald L. Baliles. As described by commission member Michael Heyman, who is currently the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, the commission was "composed of a distinguished group of former college and university presidents, board members, state legislators, former governors, and members of the media." Heyman might also have added "prominent business leaders," but noticeably absent from his characterization of the panel is any reference to participation by individuals representing a faculty perspective.

The interests of higher education would be well served if several of the commission's findings and recommendations were taken to heart by legislators, governing board members, and faculty. The AGB report properly emphasizes the need for strong and effective presidential leadership if colleges and universities are to succeed in reestablishing their position of respect and influence in American society. The 1966 AAUP *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, jointly formulated with the AGB and the American Council on Education, recognizes the central role of presidential leadership and the need for a president to "envision new horizons for

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the institution." Not only must presidents be the most visible spokespersons for their institutions and have the qualifications to be chief academic officer, but they also serve as the key link between the various constituencies that make up the university community.

The commission correctly observes that many of the problems currently plaguing the governance of institutions of higher education stem from the fact that boards of trustees (especially of public institutions) have become "highly political" and that many individuals are now being appointed to governing boards with little regard for their expertise in, or commitment to, the traditions of higher education. The panel thus calls for a number of reforms, including the establishment of merit criteria for board appointments, that would depoliticize the role of governing boards.

The report also offers a justified warning to faculty who fail to match their commitment to their discipline with an equal commitment to the fate of their institution. Faculty themselves have played a role in developing a reward system that recognizes scholarship in a narrowly defined discipline but not loyalty and commitment to the institution, and to higher education in general. The commission is correct in arguing that shared governance cannot succeed if faculty are not willing to be actively involved in efforts to identify and advance the best interests of the entire institution, and not just their own discipline.

Although there is much to praise in the AGB report, there are also some very serious flaws in its approach to the problems of governance. It is possible to agree with the commission's view that presidential leadership is essential for the health of institutions of higher learning, but at the same time to raise questions about some of the assumptions that seem to underlie the commission's approach to achieving a strengthened academic presidency.

The commission proclaims its belief that the "tradition of shared governance...needs to be reshaped, not scrapped," and reaffirms the principle that "faculty views almost always

will be decisive on academic issues." Nevertheless, in supporting a strengthened academic presidency, the report attacks collegial approaches to decision-making and calls upon presidents to free themselves from the constraints and delays of consensus-building. In emphasizing what it sees as the problem of colleges and universities being "neither as nimble nor as adaptable as the times require," the commission appears to uphold a model of corporate management in which the chief executive officer "must resist academia's insatiable appetite for the kind of excessive consultation that can bring an institution to a standstill."

It would, of course, be foolish to claim that frustrating and lengthy delays never occur in the deliberative process of shared governance, but it is highly misleading for the commission to imply that most of the problems confronting colleges and universities today stem from the existence of collegial systems of decision-making that make it possible for faculty to obstruct most necessary change. In the first place, at too many institutions an effective and meaningful faculty role in governance has never been established. If one were to do a survey of institutions currently experiencing the most severe crises, including the danger of closure, it is likely that far more institutions with weak or non-existent traditions of shared governance would be on the list than institutions at which collegial decision-making has been the norm. Conversely, most of the institutions of higher learning in the country that have achieved the greatest respect and world-wide reputations for excellence would be the ones at which traditions of shared governance are strongest.

Secondly, much of the AGB report's emphasis on the need for speed and flexibility in academic decision-making reflects the commission's failure to acknowledge the fundamental differences in purpose and organization between institutions of higher education and corporations engaged in for-profit business.

While businesses, whose ultimate goal is to create profits for their stockholders, may need constantly to shift resources and open and close product lines in order to meet

the demands of the market, colleges and universities must never become solely responsive to the current vagaries of market demand. If, in a given year, students at a particular college showed no interest in the study of philosophy, it would hardly be appropriate for that institution to close down its philosophy department. Curricula do change, and departments may ultimately come and go, but it is the nature of the educational enterprise that decisions about such matters require a considerably longer time frame than might be the case for a business selling hula hoops or platform shoes.

The corporate model of speedy and flexible decision-making that looms beneath the surface of the AGB report is, at least in part, predicated on the possibility that exists in the corporate world of measuring with some degree of precision costs and outcomes, with a quantifiable profit serving as the bottom line. Such standards, which many state legislatures are now calling for, cannot be definitively established for institutions of higher learning because their product, new knowledge and the education of students, is in many ways intangible. It may be possible to measure student credit hours and numbers of articles and books written, but who is to say that the learning that goes on in a chemistry class of 200 students should be considered equivalent to the learning that goes on in ten French classes of 20 students each, or that a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel has the same "value" as a self-promoting "book" published by a vanity press. Consequently, notions of corporate efficiency are not generally applicable to institutions of higher education. In fact, the more such models are applied to colleges and universities, the more likely such institutions will begin to lose sight of their true function as places where the pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment is treasured not simply for affording measurable cash value, but also for producing the spiritual nourishment that is essential to

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human existence.

Certainly, there are many aspects of modern university operations that are analogous to the activities that occur in private sector businesses and that ought to be run according to good business principles. At its core, however, a college or university is a unique form of community. The ties that bind teachers, researchers, and students into a community of scholars are qualitatively different from the ties that bind stockholders, managers, and employees in a private business. A college or university is less a hierarchical bureaucracy in which those at the top can claim authority based on superior training and technical expertise to others in the organization than it is a community in which faculty and administrators are in many ways peers who share a common educational background.


The AGB report at several points acknowledges the importance of presidents trying to build consensus among a variety of constituencies, but the whole emphasis on timely decision-making and presidential authority is embedded in an approach that would move colleges and universities further away from a model of collegial decision-making and toward a more hierarchical system of organization.

The commission's recommendations regarding the conduct of presidential searches clearly illustrate this tendency. First, the commission downplays the importance of presidents coming out of academic backgrounds. In arguing that so long as a prospective candidate has experience in the "management of a complex organization," the lack of academic credentials might be overlooked, the commission reinforces its erroneous assumption that colleges and universities are just like any other large institution. College presidents, in fact, are not interchangeable with other CEO's because they ought to be able to lay claim to the status of chief academic officer and leader of the faculty.

The report is also critical of openness and publicity in presidential searches and calls for such searches to "be treated as personnel matters, which normally are not subject to public scrutiny." The model the commission is using is

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clearly drawn from the world of business. While there may be good reasons why a large business corporation might feel compelled to conduct its search for a new chief executive officer in secret, the same considerations do not apply equally to the choice of a university or college president. Ultimately, the authority to select a president rests with the governing board. However, the process of choosing a new president offers a unique opportunity for the constituents of the institution to reaffirm their sense of community and common mission. Because a university or college is at its core a community devoted to scholarship and learning, the members of the community must regard the president not as an externally imposed administrator, but as their own leader and representative. If the selection process takes place wholly in secret, the search for a new president cannot effectively be used as an opportunity for the entire community to recommit itself to the purposes of the institution.

The debate over governance and the role of the academic presidency will continue well into the future, since it is driven by political and economic forces that are not likely to disappear any time soon. In this debate, it will be crucial to the fate of higher education in the United States to prevent the discussion from proceeding on the assumption that university presidents are no different from CEO's of any other large complex organization and that the management of a college or university is strictly analogous to the management of a profit-maximizing business corporation. The development of our current traditions of shared governance, in which faculty play a central role and thoughtful collegial forms of deliberation are valued and not reflexively derided, has helped to make American higher education admired and respected throughout the world. If anything, shared governance will need to be strengthened, not weakened, if we are to survive the current crisis with the integrity and quality of our educational system preserved. 

University Presidential Searches

Exercises in Secrecy or Shared Governance?

BY DENNIS M. CLAUSEN

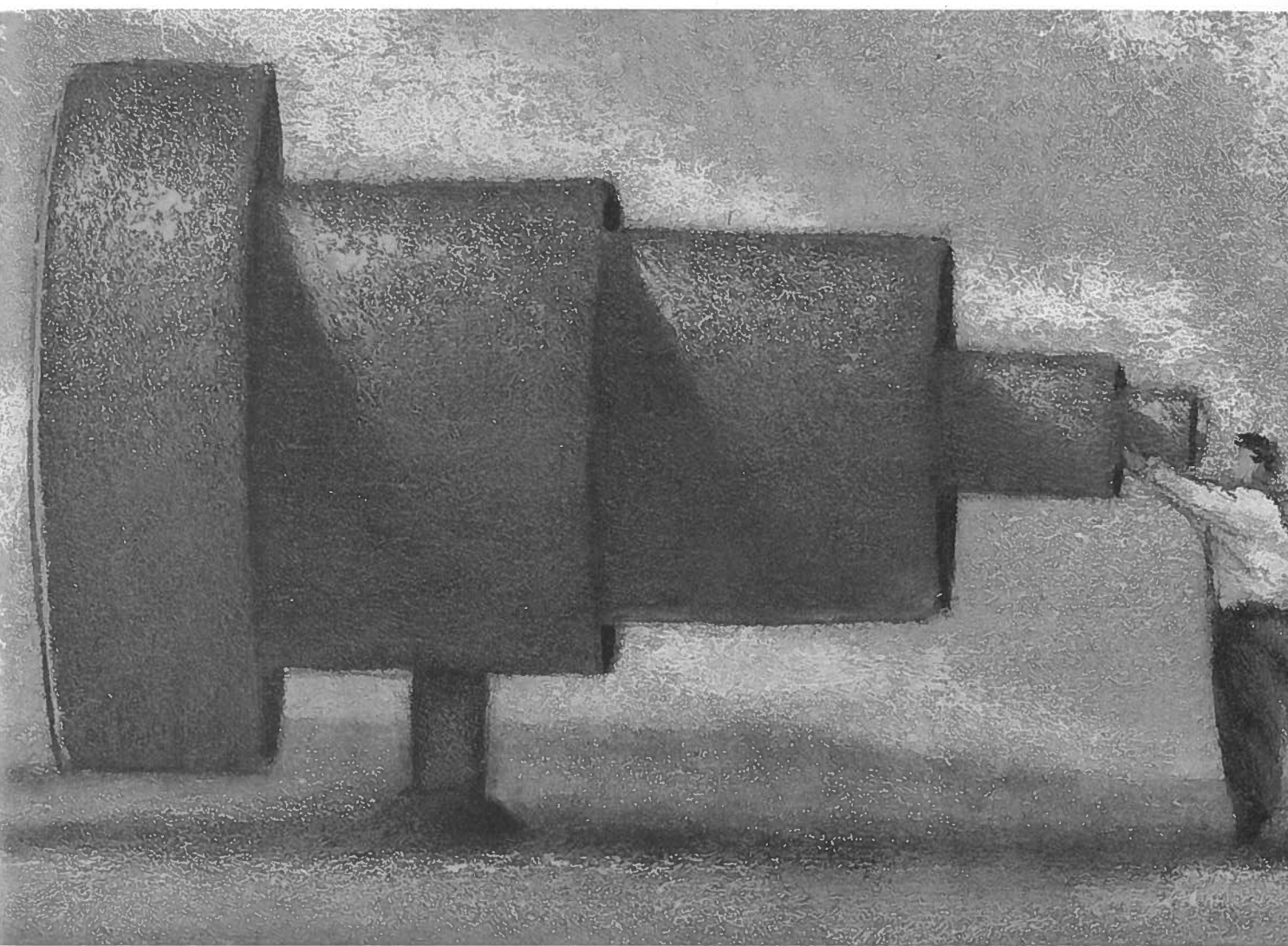
THE RECENT SHIFT FROM SHARED GOVERNANCE to more authoritarian models on our nation's campuses has significantly altered the way many universities conduct their presidential searches. The search model that involved consensus-building among the various constituencies of the university community has been replaced on many campuses by a secretive, closed-door process controlled by trustees and administrators. Simultaneously, the faculty has been excluded from meaningful participation in these presidential searches.

The governance structures on most of our campuses, especially those that adopted the principle of shared governance, were modeled after the spirit and principles that formed the foundations of a democratic society. As Joan Wallach Scott points out in her article, "Defending the Tradition of Shared Governance," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (August 9, 1996), "When faculty members and administrators defend shared governance...they are defending the practice of democracy" (p. B3).

A university is not, however, a pure democracy. In university presidential searches, for example, every voice and vote is not necessarily equal. The faculty members, trustees, and administrators on the presidential search committee would clearly have more input into all stages of the search process than would the other members of the university community. Also, regardless of whatever procedures are adopted, few people would question the right of the trustees/regents to make the final selection of the new president (with the caveat that they should not select a president who is unacceptable to the faculty). Still, shared governance, as it has traditionally been practiced on our nation's campuses, shares many of the same principles that guide democratic societies when they choose new leaders.

Among those principles is the idea that university presidents should *not* be political or back room appointments. University communities, or representatives of specific constituencies, should participate in the selection of the list of finalists and the election of a new president. Furthermore, the faculty, working together with the other citizens of an academic community to

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protect and promote the educational mission of their institution, should be expected to have a primary role in university presidential searches.

The faculty's voices and votes in the search/selection of a new president are the best guarantees we have that the educational mission of a university will never be sacrificed to self-serving, vested interest groups inside or outside of the university community. These and other safeguards inherent in the principle of shared governance protect the integrity of American higher education and keep it relatively free from exploitation and corruption. These safeguards have also helped to build the finest colleges and universities in the world.

Why, then, is the principle of shared governance, especially as it pertains to university presidential searches, under such attack on our nation's campuses? Why are entire faculties excluded from some campus presidential searches, while their role in the search/selection process is simultaneously usurped by outside consulting firms? Do those who care deeply about the future of American higher education have the right to suspect that there are hidden agendas at work here? Or is all of this very benign?

AAUP's Position on Presidential Searches

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, and most college faculty, would disagree with a secretive, closed-door method of selecting a university president. AAUP is not, to be sure, alone in its opposition to this secretive method of conducting a presidential search. Various public interest groups, many in the media, and even the courts have opposed these secretive searches. Recently, for example, three newspapers charged the University of Michigan with violating a state open-meetings law, and "A State Judge agreed...to let the University of Michigan resume its search for a new president but ordered it to make information about the candidates public" (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 25, 1996, p. A35).

AAUP's position on university presidential searches, which is stated in the Association's *Policy Documents and Reports*, "Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Administrators," is the very epitome of the principle of shared governance. It also recognizes the primary role of faculty involvement in university presidential searches, and it encourages as much openness as humanly possible in these search efforts.

The *Statement on Government* emphasizes the primary role of faculty and board in the search for a president. The search may be initiated either by separate committees of the faculty and board or by a joint committee of the faculty and board or of faculty, board, students, and others; and separate committees may subsequently be joined. In a joint committee, the numbers from each constituency should reflect both the primacy of faculty concern and the range of other groups, including students, that have a legitimate claim to some involvement. Each major group should elect its own members to serve on the committee, and the rules governing the search should be arrived at jointly. A joint committee should determine the size of the majority which will be controlling in making an appointment. When separate committees are used, the board, with which the legal power of appointment rests, should either select a name from among those submitted by the faculty committee or should agree that no person will be chosen over the objections of the faculty committee. (*AAUP Policy Documents and Reports*, 1995, pp. 190–191)

No one disputes the primary role of regents/trustees in a presidential search. It is a given—both in the above statement and in other AAUP publications. Recently, however, there has been a nationwide assault on the faculty's rightful claim also to playing a primary role in university presidential searches.

The rationale behind AAUP's recommendations regarding the faculty's primary role in presidential searches, as it is implied in the above statement and other publications, is as follows:

1. **The faculty's primary role in presidential search efforts is to promote and protect the educational mission of the university.** No constituency in the university has greater expertise in, and commitment to, the educational mission of the university than the faculty. Without the faculty to act as its primary advocate on the presidential search committee, and to interview and evaluate the candidates, the educational mission of the university loses its central role and is placed at great risk.

2. **The faculty's primary role in presidential search efforts protects the public's interests in our system of higher education.** Faculty involvement in these search efforts is an essential component in the system of checks and balances that protects our system of higher education from internal and external exploitation of its resources. Conversely, recent history demonstrates that the public's interests in higher education may be at risk when these searches are controlled exclusively by regents, trustees, and/or administrators.

3. **The faculty's primary role in presidential**

search efforts promotes the spirit of shared governance that is indispensable to the development of superior institutions of higher education. To govern effectively, a university president must achieve a consensus and a foundation of support among the various elements of the university community during the search process. This consensus legitimizes the role of the new president and promotes a sense of cohesiveness and community that will prove to be invaluable throughout both the search effort and the president-elect's term in office. However, this consensus cannot be achieved if the faculty, the cornerstone of any educational institution, is denied its primary role in the search effort.

4. **Consulting firms, if they are hired, should be used in presidential searches primarily as a source of information, and as a means of expanding the pool of candidates.** They should *not* be regarded as convenient substitutes for meaningful faculty participation in the search process. Consulting firms, if they are hired to limit or exclude the faculty from meaningful participation in the search process, while simultaneously cloaking the search effort in a shroud of secrecy, should *not* be used in college and university presidential searches. Used this way, consulting firms will inevitably create resentment, distrust and divisions among the various campus constituencies.



The Secretive, Closed Door Method of Conducting a University Presidential Search

MANY COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS, trustees and regents favor the more secretive, closed door method of selecting a new president—often by excluding or greatly limiting the faculty's role in the search process. For example, the Commission on the Academic Presidency, which was created by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, “urges states to view presidential searches as personnel matters, exempt from open-meetings laws” (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 13, 1996). Shared governance as it applies to university presidential searches, the Commission argues, is good in theory, but “in practice it leads to institutional inertia.”

To justify their positions, those who advocate more secrecy and confidentiality in the search effort frequently cite negative caricatures of faculty, describing them as recalcitrant, self-serving and incapable of working for the greater good of their universities. For example, James L. Fisher and James V. Koch, in their book *Presidential Leadership: Making a Difference* (Oryx Press, 1996), tread on the edges of these caricatures when they cite as some kind of universal truism “the tendency of zealous faculty-dominated search committees to eliminate any candidate who is associated with strong stances or controversy” (p. 274).

One could argue that the purpose of an open search is to expose such people as inferior candidates and administrators.

Elsewhere, these same authors encourage universities to hire presidential search consultants *before* politically motivated “faculty, staff, and students...have already infected and contaminated the search process” (p. 277).

Like all caricatures, perhaps there is some truth to the ones that are frequently raised to justify secretive searches. But such broad-based caricatures of faculty are seldom so universally true as to base policy decisions on them. (Please note the survey results of over 100 universities in “Successful Presidential Searches” later in this article; most administrators and trustees who *actually served with faculty representatives* on presidential

search committees, and who responded to the survey, learned through experience that the negative caricature of university faculty is false, misleading and counterproductive.)

Some faculty can undoubtedly be recalcitrant and self-serving. But certainly recent events in American higher education indicate very clearly that *some* administrators and *some* trustees can also be described as recalcitrant and self-serving. Does this mean that administrators and trustees should be excluded from the search effort? Of course not! Administrators, trustees, and faculty *all* play a vital role in the presidential search effort—and each should respect the others’ roles.

Perhaps the most destructive thing that can happen in the early stages of a presidential search is for any one of these entities to publicly demonize any of the others. Broad-based mutual trust and respect will do much to ensure a successful presidential search. Negative caricatures to justify a secretive search will create insurmountable problems for the search committee. Like administrators and trustees, the faculty has a vital role in presidential searches, and it must be respected.

Secrecy to Protect the Best Candidates

THOSE WHO FAVOR A MORE SECRETIVE SEARCH PROCESS offer a variety of other reasons and arguments for their position.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, in an article titled, “Professors Gripe as Headhunters Seek Presidents” (January 9, 1995), the major reason these people favor restricting the search effort to the upper levels of the administration and trustees, and conducting the search/selection process behind closed doors, is because “the best candidates aren’t interested in jeopardizing their current jobs by revealing themselves or submitting to a faculty grilling within the small world of academia.”

There seem to be two assumptions implicit in this statement: 1) the “best candidates” are concerned that their current universities might look with disfavor upon their efforts to seek a presidential position on another campus; and 2) the “best candidates” do not want to subject themselves to intensive, frequently stressful interview sessions with faculty members during the presidential search process.

In their book, *Choosing a College President: Opportunities and Constraints* (Princeton University Press, 1990), Judith McLaughlin and David Riesman address these and other issues. They cite examples of several upper-level administrators who ran into trouble on their current campuses when it was discovered that they were candidates for presidential positions on other campuses (pp. 136–37). However, they also cite examples of candidates who *themselves* leaked information that they were presidential candidates on other campuses. In the process, they were offered increases in salary and fringe benefits, and other inducements to remain on their current campuses (pp. 137–38). Obviously, in the context of this ten-year study of presidential searches, open searches cut both ways. Some candidates have been hurt by them. Other candidates have received a career boost when they were identified with presidential searches on other campuses.

If the “best candidates” always received a career boost when they were publicly identified as candidates for a presidential position on another campus, it would greatly simplify the issue of secrecy versus openness in presidential searches. These candidates would be the strongest advocates of openness because they would potentially have much to gain from an open search. If the “weak or mediocre candidates” were the only ones who ran into problems on their current campuses when they were identified with presidential searches on another campus, perhaps it would also simplify the issue. One could argue that the purpose of an open search *is* to expose such people as inferior candidates and administrators. (A secretive search, on the other hand, might very well allow these weak or mediocre candidates into the list of finalists, and perhaps even into the president’s office—creating a potential disaster for the university.)

Unfortunately, the issue becomes more complex when the evidence suggests that the “best candidates” *can*, at times, encounter career difficulties when they are identified with presidential searches on other campuses. This raises the exceedingly difficult question of just how much confidentiality should a presidential search committee insist on to protect such candidates? For example, in *Choosing a College President*, authors McLaughlin and Riesman cite the case of one candidate for a presidential position who was already under attack for being primarily concerned with the academic program, rather than the football program, on his current campus (p. 137). When it was revealed that he was a candidate for a presidential position on another campus, his critics seized the opportunity to discredit him further. Eventually this individual was fired from his cur-

rent position, even though most university faculty members would probably commend him for defending the academic component of his institution from a board and alumni who wanted a stronger football team. Certainly, one could use this case, and others McLaughlin and Riesman cite, to justify more secrecy and confidentiality in presidential searches.

Universities, however, must protect themselves as well as their candidates. When a university conducts a presidential search, it is putting its future on the line, especially if it inadvertently selects a presidential candidate who is unethical or somehow unqualified to be a campus leader. Recent media reports, unfortunately, cite far too many examples of university presidents who betrayed and exploited their universities for personal gain. For these and other reasons, a university cannot afford to make a mistake in a presidential search. The stakes are much too high for a university to accept anything less than full disclosure of each candidate's character, qualifications, and personal values as they are revealed to the university community through a series of open forums.

An Acceptable Middle Ground

IS THERE AN ACCEPTABLE MIDDLE GROUND BETWEEN THE need to protect the candidates and the need to protect the university conducting the search? Perhaps a case can be made that after the faculty has been involved in establishing the ground rules and faculty representatives have been elected to the search committee, the initial recruiting and screening of the candidates could be conducted by the presidential search committee working behind some degree of confidentiality. The committee members should, nonetheless, meet periodically with their respective constituencies to inform them of the general progress of the search effort without identifying the specific candidates. It is unwise, however, to throw a cloak of confidentiality around the finalists until the time that one of them is named the new president. After the initial screening, the names of the finalists should be announced publicly, and they should be required to engage in a series of open interviews with the faculty and other members of the university community. (Of course, they should be forewarned at the very outset that these are the ground rules.)

Chancellor-Emeritus Arnold Grobman, in a book review of *Choosing a College President*, which appeared in *Academe* (January–February, 1992), takes a similar position. Grobman writes, "The greatest campus harmony can be achieved if the board, at the outset, states that it will not appoint a new president who is not acceptable to the faculty. This, of course, translates into open meetings of (at least) the faculty at large, or, in large institutions, with a number of faculty groups" (pp. 40–41). Charles B. Neff and Barbara Leondar, authors of *Presidential Search* (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1992), tend to agree. Although Neff and Leondar argue that secrecy and confidentiality are virtues in many aspects of university presidential searches, they concede that open meetings of the finalists with the faculty "serve valuable purposes. They enable local constituencies to see and size up the candidates, an exercise that is particularly important for faculty and administration" (p. 27).

Essentially, in the early screening stages of the search, some

concessions to secrecy and confidentiality can probably be made to protect the interests of the candidates. In the latter stages of the search, and especially once the finalists have been selected, the university's primary concern should be to protect its own future. However, it cannot do this if secrecy and confidentiality prevail throughout the search effort.

Secrecy to Protect the Best Candidates from Stressful Interviews

LESS DEFENSIBLE IS THE ARGUMENT THAT SECRECY IS needed in presidential searches to protect the best candidates from stressful interview sessions with faculty and other members of the university community. To most faculty members, this argument would raise numerous questions and responses.

Wouldn't the "best candidates" have already established a healthy track record for interacting well with their current faculties? If so, why would the "best candidates" fear interacting with their new faculties during the interview process? Isn't their ability to work with faculty members one of the reasons why they might be the "best candidates?" Wouldn't the "best candidates" embrace such an opportunity? Of course, if they are "weak or mediocre candidates," interacting with the faculty during the interview stages of the search might reveal precisely why they are weak or mediocre. But wouldn't the university seeking a new president want to expose these potential problems during the interview process?

Also, if they are indeed the "best candidates," they must have conducted many interviews on their own campuses in which they tried to distinguish between the weak, the mediocre, and the best candidates for various administrative and faculty positions. If so, why wouldn't they understand the need for other campuses to conduct similar extensive interview sessions with the final candidates?

One of the purposes of a series of interview sessions is to determine whether or not the candidates can stand up to the stresses of interacting with the members of a university community. Just about every faculty member can cite at least one candidate for a faculty position who looked very good on paper, but who self-destructed during



the interview stages of a search. If this is true for faculty members, it is equally true for university presidents.

Universities must not deny themselves the opportunity to view each candidate's performance under stress. It would be foolhardy for a university to avoid the kind of open forums that reveal a candidate's true character and values—warts and all.

Other Arguments for Secrecy in Presidential Searches

OTHER ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE SECRETIVE, closed-door presidential search process are discussed in "Professors Gripe as Headhunters Seek Presidents" (*Wall Street Journal*, January 9, 1995). (Counter arguments are in parentheses.)

1. Many universities are looking for business/corporate types to be their new presidents, but these candidates might be unacceptable to a university faculty. Hence, these candidates would probably not survive a more open search/selection process. (How can a university president, whatever his or her background, govern effectively without the support of the faculty?)

2. Consulting firms admit that "a desire to take on the faculty is a big reason college [administrators, trustees, and regents] are turning to them" for help in university presidential searches. Many consulting firms, in turn, recommend more secrecy and confidentiality in the search process. Hence, the faculty is frequently excluded and shared governance is abandoned. (Doesn't this immediately introduce a confrontational, combative tone into the search/selection process? Does this bode well for future cooperation between the administration, the new president and the faculty as they attempt to work together to build a quality academic program?)

3. Trustees do not believe they have the necessary expertise to conduct a successful search effort. In the same *Wall Street Journal* article (January 9, 1995), Arthur Hauptman, a consultant to the American Council on Education, says, "Boards of directors basically feel unprepared to take on the task [of conducting a presidential search]." Hence, they frequently decide to by-pass the faculty and turn to consulting firms. (Isn't this even more reason to give faculty members a central role in the search/selection process, since they *have* the very expertise and training the trustees lack? Most faculty members have served on numerous search committees throughout their academic careers. Why would administrators and trustees want to cut themselves off from this wealth of knowledge during the presidential search process?)

In sum, none of the arguments for a secretive search process addresses the fundamental question of what happens to these universities after they have gone through this kind of secretive, closed-door presidential search? Do these campuses become better educational institutions for having excluded a significant part of their academic community, and especially the faculty, from the presidential search effort? Or have these campuses been weakened as educational institutions as a direct result of their decision to select their new presidents through this secretive, closed-door process?

It would be foolhardy for a university to avoid the kind of open forums that reveal a candidate's true character and values—warts and all.

Michigan State University's Presidential Search

ONE OF THE BETTER examples of the problems inherent in the secretive, closed-door method of selecting a new university president is the search Michigan State University conducted in 1993. As reported in an article titled, "A Botched Search?," in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 27, 1993), "The [MSU] search was one of the messiest ever. On that, almost everyone agrees." According to Henry Silverman, a history professor who helped set up the search

committee, "We proved to the world how not to go about a presidential search." By the time Michigan State University had completed the search effort, everyone on campus was seemingly pointing the finger of blame at everyone else.

The board of trustees, motivated by its desire to make the search secretive and confidential, failed to consult adequately with the faculty and other members of MSU's academic community throughout the search effort. Although the search eventually produced a new president, M. Peter McPherson, a businessman and former Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development, it was a very controversial and deeply divisive decision. Furthermore, the search violated just about every one of the recommendations in the AAUP's statement on *Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Administrators*. (Perhaps this is precisely why the search was so controversial and deeply divisive.)

Secrecy prevailed throughout the MSU search effort. During the earlier screening of the candidates, McPherson "did not want his name to become public and so was not among the three finalists." Furthermore, "seven of the eight trustees [agreed] that they desperately wanted a confidential search," but found that the search became only more highly publicized and controversial as a direct result of their attempts to keep it secretive. Only one member of the board of trustees, Dorothy Gonzales, argued for "making the search public." Furthermore, "She believes that the board's desire for confidentiality was its undoing." Some trustees "blamed the media" for sabotaging the search. Other trustees

University of Washington's Presidential Search

THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON EXPERIENCED many of the same problems in its presidential search—and for many of the same reasons. As reported in a series of articles in *The Seattle Times*, UW also adopted the secretive, closed-door method of conducting its presidential search.

In an article titled, "UW Search Panel May Keep Names of Finalists Under Wraps," *The Seattle Times* (January 10, 1995) discusses the extent to which the search committee and some of the candidates insisted on secrecy and confidentiality. At the outset, the search committee had expressed a commitment "to make the names of finalists public...[and to] invite final candidates to the campus...to meet with UW students, faculty, staff and the regents." However, that commitment to openness soon yielded to the same desire for secrecy that set the tone throughout the Michigan State University presidential search. It also created many of the same problems MSU experienced in its presidential search. According to the article, UW's search committee justified the need for greater secrecy by arguing, "It's the only way to attract the best candidates...The concern is that a candidate could suffer if his or her interest in moving became known." There were, however, dissenting opinions expressed by others affiliated with the University of Washington. For example, Garrick Hileman, UW chair of the Washington Student Lobby, pointed out, "I think with a public institution like this, part of selecting a president is public exposure... This is not a private business; it's funded by the taxpayer."

The debate eventually opened up a schism between the UW Board of Regents, who favored more secrecy in the selection process, and the media, UW faculty, and the taxpaying public, most of whom argued that a public university has a legal and ethical obligation to conduct an open search for a new president. *The Seattle Times* filed a lawsuit against The University of Washington, alleging that UW had violated "the state's Open Public Meetings Act" in its effort to conduct the presidential search behind closed doors (*The Seattle Times*, March 18, 1995).

When the search failed because two finalists withdrew and one finalist turned down the position, the board of regents pointed the finger of blame at "the consultant for giving 'poor advice' that the finalists for the presidency be brought to campus and publicly introduced." As far as the regents were concerned, the remedy for the failed search was more secrecy, more confidentiality, and more closed-door sessions. Others in the state of Washington disagreed. They pointed out that the regents' decision to conduct a secret search fragmented the university community and opened up a divisive schism between the university and the public it serves. Under these conditions, any respectable presidential candidate—who would eventually have to deal with an alienated faculty, aroused media, and an angry taxpaying public—would probably have withdrawn his/her name as a finalist.

blamed "the leaks and the state's open-meetings law." Still other trustees "blamed the search firm that the trustees had finally hired...saying it hadn't done its job."

The board of trustees eventually selected McPherson as Michigan State University's new president within 24 hours of announcing him as a candidate. This decision, however, was made over the objections of the Faculty Senate, which had supported another candidate.

According to the same article, anger and deep divisions understandably lingered on in the aftermath of the search effort. The article reports that "Some professors...believe that Mr. McPherson, as a last-minute finalist, contributed to the secrecy and has been tainted by the process." Deep divisions and distrust have understandably been opened up between faculty and trustees. With classic understatement, the article concludes that President-elect McPherson "now has the tough task of easing the tensions on the [MSU] campus. It won't be easy."

At the very least, one would have to conclude that the divisiveness of the Michigan State University search effort does not provide much in the way of a recommendation for the secretive, closed-door method of selecting a new university president. To the contrary, it validates the AAUP's recommended procedures, while it simultaneously serves as an advertisement for the more open, shared-governance model of selecting a university president.

Michael R. Fancher, *The Seattle Times* executive editor, pointed out in a direct letter to the regents titled, "Dear UW regents: It's time for you to do business out in public" (March 12, 1995) that "You can't essentially pick a university president in secret and then merely ratify that choice later in public." Fancher also commented on the judge's ruling in the lawsuit his newspaper had filed against the regents: "The judge said the state Open Meetings Act 'was intended to allow the public to view the decision-making process at all stages, not merely the official final action that a body takes after all the real decisions have been made'." Fancher further chastises the regents, "It's not an encouraging sign that your first response to the judge's ruling was to issue a statement reaffirming the same secret process that has failed. All it has produced is disappointment and distrust, rancor and litigation—but no president... It's time for this total secrecy to stop... Do your meaningful decision-making in the light of day."

Could anyone in the AAUP have said it any better?

Successful Presidential Searches

IN *CHOOSING A COLLEGE PRESIDENT*, AUTHORS McLAUGHLIN and Riesman cite examples of several university presidential searches in which openness, not secrecy, purportedly created serious problems for the search effort. Indeed, the five case studies they cite would seem to suggest that secrecy is preferable to openness in most aspects of university presidential searches. (Note: *Choosing a College President* was published in 1990, a few years before secretive searches created such serious problems at Michigan State University, the University of Washington and elsewhere.)

In 1994, when the University of San Diego was engaged in its own presidential search, our chapter of the AAUP decided to test some of these conclusions on a much larger scale. We mailed 200 questionnaires to colleges and universities that had engaged in presidential searches over the previous three years. We received slightly over 100 responses to our questionnaire.

Our major objective was to determine if faculty had played a primary role in other university presidential searches. We were also interested in gathering information from those colleges and universities that had recently engaged in *successful* presidential searches—although we did not identify this as our goal in the questionnaire because we did not want to prejudice the results.

A *successful* search, we reasoned, was one that united the university community in a common purpose and produced a new president who had the broad-based support of various campus constituencies. A *successful* search was also one in which the university became a stronger educational institution as a result of its presidential search effort. Related to these issues was the question of whether open or secretive searches were more likely to accomplish these goals.

Since we assumed the media was more likely to report on failed searches, or searches that encountered serious problems, we decided to by-pass newspaper reports and go directly to the people *who had actually served on university presidential search committees*. We wanted to know how (or if) they had succeeded when so many other colleges and universities had failed in their search efforts.

Our survey and report were not intended to be the final, defini-

tive statement on university presidential searches. In fact, the responses taught us that more work needed to be done on surveying members of presidential search committees to determine if broad generalizations about the faculty's role had some basis in fact. Still, the patterns we exposed were revealing to both our campus and other universities that engage in presidential searches.

Our questions, then, were designed to focus on three major issues:

- 1) Was openness or secrecy a significant factor in the presidential search?
- 2) Was faculty involvement/non-involvement a significant factor in the presidential search?
- 3) Was a consulting firm a significant factor in the presidential search?

We gathered other types of information as well, but the above

were the significant issues we wished to address in our survey of over 100 colleges and universities—most of whom, as it turned out, believed their presidential searches were successful because they united their university communities and produced a foundation of support for their new president.

We sent our questionnaire to a wide range of contact people on each of these presidential search committees, and we asked them to share their experiences with us. To encourage the respondents to be as forthright and candid as possible, we promised that we would *not* reveal their names. We would only use the names of the universities with which they were affiliated—and we will continue to honor that promise.

A successful search, we reasoned, was one that united the university community in a common purpose and produced a new president who had the broad-based support of various campus constituencies.

It should be emphasized that we received responses from a wide range of administrators, trustees, regents, and faculty members who had served on their respective university's presidential search committee. Several trustees and administrators wrote us letters expressing a range of opinions regarding their experiences on their committees. Their letters clearly reflected a deep and sincere commitment to the universities they represented during their respective presidential searches.

Nonetheless, anyone who read these responses in their entirety would have to

conclude that one of the messages that reverberated throughout the comments of people who had actually served on university presidential searches was that the open, shared-governance model of selecting a new university president is clearly preferable to the secretive, closed-door method.

Very few of the respondents cited secrecy as the key to their successful presidential searches. More typical were responses from schools such as the University of North Dakota, where the respondent praised the importance of openness in the presidential search: "We as a committee...met regularly with various faculty groups and with the University Senate to receive their input and to keep them informed of our activities... We requested, and received, both written and spoken responses from faculty, and staff about the candidates after their visits." Similarly, the College of William and Mary respondent wrote, "Profile [for the presidential candidates] was developed 'with input from faculty as a whole as solicited by Faculty Senate through campus-wide questionnaires, written report, and approval by faculty.'" The respondent from Emory and Henry College added, "The S & S [Search and Selection] Committee circulated a survey form to constituencies on campus (students, staff, faculty) and off campus... Representatives of the committee scheduled a day on campus to meet with any member of the campus who desired to share data with the committee."

Other respondents, with only a few minor exceptions, also attributed their committees' successes to the openness of their search procedures. Many indicated that the early and sustained openness of their search efforts gave their committees a credibility and legitimacy they would otherwise not have achieved. Perhaps there are campuses on which secrecy, not openness, worked in a

Very few of the respondents cited secrecy as the key to their successful presidential searches.

successful presidential search effort, but according to the results of our survey, these campuses would be a numerically distinct minority.

With respect to the issue of faculty involvement in successful presidential searches, the results were equally consistent. Another message that reverberated throughout the 100-plus responses to our questionnaire was that universities that include their faculties in a meaningful way in presidential searches will conduct more professional and successful search efforts. Furthermore, these universities, their new presidents, and the public will be the ultimate beneficiaries of meaningful faculty involvement in these searches. The consistent support for faculty involvement in presidential searches led us to only one conclusion. There is strong, widespread sentiment in the American academic community, *especially among those who have actually served on presidential search committees*, that meaningful faculty involvement is invaluable in these search efforts.

For example, the respondent from Wheelock College wrote, "Having faculty members represented on the committee we found to be most helpful." The contact person at Dakota Wesleyan wrote, "The most successful aspect of our search was not only our results, *but* inclusiveness in the process of all constituency groups." The representative from Albright College wrote, "the Search Committee operated by consensus as much as possible, and there was a clear understanding that the trustees would make the final selection from the short prioritized list of candidates but that they would not select someone who did not have the faculty representatives' support." The contact person from La Roche College wrote, "The faculty were important equal members of the committee—their input and perspective were valuable to the trustees as well." Cornell College's respondent wrote, "The diversity on the Committee with respect to constituencies was certainly the ideal... The advantage to all constituencies having a stake is that the campus is more than satisfied with the result because they participated." The respondent from Southern Arkansas University agreed: "The fact that each segment of the university constituency was represented (most elected by their peers) was a *major factor* in the success of the committee—i. e., the committee had credibility from the start."

There were only a handful of responses that expressed reservations about faculty involvement in the presidential search process. To the contrary, administrators, trustees, regents, and faculty members who answered our questionnaire disagreed on some things, but there was consistent agreement that meaningful faculty participation was one of the most important factors in a successful presidential search.

Furthermore, those administrators, trustees, and regents who actually served beside faculty representatives on presidential search committees did not describe them as recalcitrant, self-serving and/or incapable of working for the greater good of the university. To the contrary, they tended to describe faculty who were involved in the search process as dedicated, knowledgeable, loyal to their respective universities, and quite capable of seeing the larger picture in university presidential searches. The negative caricature of university faculty ceased to have any validity for most of these administrators, trustees, and regents. They became defenders of the "faculty's primary role" in university presidential searches.


There was no such unanimity of agreement with respect to the question we asked, "Was any outside consulting/headhunting agency used?" Some respondents "strongly advised the use of a consultant." Others replied, "Headhunters did not really help—would not recommend the use of headhunter." Still others warned, "Watch the degree to which you allow consultants to run the process. Some consultants will take control if permitted." Significantly, even those respondents who recommended that consulting or headhunting firms should be used did not suggest that they should replace the faculty in the search effort. Most of these respondents still perceived faculty involvement to be a crucial element in a successful presidential search effort.

The Lessons of Academic History

MOST OF THE PROBLEMS UNIVERSITIES EXPERIENCE IN their presidential searches are the result of inexperience, errors in judgment, and/or a failure to recognize the crucial role of shared governance in the search process. However, in light of recent media coverage regarding scandal and corruption in higher education, we would be remiss if we did not point out that there is an emerging dark side to academia that cannot be ignored. This dark side underscores the seriousness of the governance issues involved in university presidential searches. It also demonstrates that the debate regarding the methods colleges and universities use to select their presidents is not simply part of some esoteric

academic exercise. These governance issues, and this debate, are central to the integrity of higher education—and, to a certain extent, the future of our nation.

If nothing else, recent media reports regarding administrative improprieties, especially in the offices of university presidents, should serve as a healthy reminder that these upper-level administrators have the power to do enormous good for their campuses, but they can also jeopardize the very future of their universities. In either case, the selection of a university president is a matter of utmost importance to the entire university community, and the process should be conducted in a manner that guarantees the highest levels of ethical behavior and accountability *once the president-elect assumes office.*

The principle of shared governance, which has made American higher education the envy of the world, must be respected in college and university presidential searches. Trustees *and* faculty both play an essential role in this system of shared governance, and they must both have a primary role in university presidential searches. Universities that recognize and respect the role of each of these constituencies in the presidential search process, and the "primary role of faculty and board" as recommended by the AAUP, are promoting and utilizing the concept of shared governance to its fullest potential—and in the true spirit of a democratic society. These universities are not only protecting their educational missions, they are also protecting their own futures as quality institutions of higher education. 

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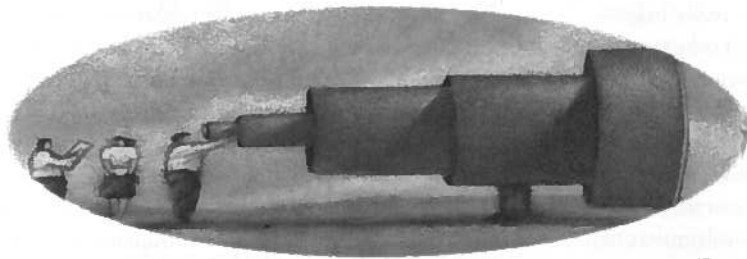
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Presidential Search Committee

Checklist

BY MURIEL E. POSTON

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW PRESIDENT IS ONE OF THE most significant instances of shared governance in the life of a college or university, but it is also one of the most challenging. Although governing boards have the legal responsibility for selection of a president, the process of selection is fundamental in determining which candidate has the appropriate academic leadership and administrative skills needed to lead the institution. The recognition of shared responsibility in the search process for academic administrators is reflected in the American Association of University Professors' 1966 *Statement on Government*:

Joint effort of a most critical kind must be taken when an institution chooses a new president. The selection of a chief administrative officer should follow upon a cooperative search by the governing board and the faculty, taking into consideration the opinions of others who are appropriately interested.

AAUP's 1981 *Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Administrators* articulates the importance of faculty participation:

The *Statement on Government* emphasizes the primary role of faculty and board in the search for a president. The search may be initiated either by separate committees of

the faculty and board or by a joint committee of the faculty and board or of faculty, board, students, and others; and separate committees may subsequently be joined. In a joint committee, the numbers from each constituency should reflect both the primacy of faculty concern and the range of other groups, including students, that have legitimate claim to some involvement. Each group should select its own members to serve on the committee, and the rules governing the search should be arrived at jointly. A joint committee should determine the size of the majority which will be controlling in making the appointment. When separate committees are used, the board, with which the legal authority rests, should either select a name from among those submitted by the faculty committee or should agree that no person will be chosen over the objections of the faculty committee.

The following is intended as a practical guide for implementation of these principles in the search for a president.

Search Committees

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, WORKING WITH THE FACULTY, creates the search committee structure and defines the charge of the committee. The committee may be formed as a single entity representing both the faculty and the board, or there may be a

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two-tiered committee structure. In the latter case, the faculty committee—which may include other constituent groups such as students and alumni—is separate from the board committee. However, a single committee representing the faculty and board is the most common standard. Such a committee provides an opportunity for shared perspectives and broader understanding among the various groups and thus fosters a sense of unity in accomplishing a common goal—identifying a president who is qualified to serve as both the chief academic and the chief executive officer of the institution.

- **Committee Composition.** Representatives from the board and faculty as well as representatives of other institutional constituencies commonly serve on joint search committees. Because faculty play a significant role, their representation on the committee should not be limited to a single member. The precise number is dependent on the size of the committee but should reflect the primacy of faculty concern in determining presidential leadership. The involvement of administrators on the search committee is problematic and should be discouraged since they may represent the perspective of the outgoing administration.
- **Committee Chair.** The chair appointment is typically made prior to the formation of the search committee. The joint search committee chair is typically chosen by the board and is usually a trustee who can provide an important connection between the board and the search committee. In cases where a two-tiered committee structure is utilized, a trustee chairs the board committee and a senior faculty member chairs the constituent group committee.
- **Committee Selection.** Each constituent group should select its own members to serve on the committee. This gives the greatest sense of legitimacy to the members and acknowledges the respective roles of the constituent groups.
- **Committee Size.** The size of a joint search committee will vary according to the institution but may range from nine to twenty. Larger committees are not necessarily less effective, and a good process is considerably more important than the size in determining a successful outcome. In cases of a two-tiered committee structure, the individual committees are smaller.
- **Committee Charge.** The search committee charge is formulated by the board, in consultation with other constituents, and reflects the role of the board in making the selection of the president and in defining the terms and conditions of the appointment. The charge also will set forth other criteria such as:
 - search committee membership
 - statement of presidential leadership qualities
 - breadth of the search: regional or national
 - expectations regarding use of search consultants
 - number of candidates to be recommended to the board for the final decision
 - date by which the board expects recommendations of nominees

Search Process

THE SEARCH COMMITTEE HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF designing its own procedures and timetables. The basic functions of a search involve the identification of candidates; screening and interviewing; and the recommendation of a short list of candidates to the board for consideration. Key factors that should be considered in structuring the search process are:

- **Search consultants.** If executive recruiters or consultants are to be utilized, their selection (or that of a search firm) is one of the first tasks of the committee, unless this decision has already been mandated by the board. A search consultant may be most helpful in educating the committee about the search process, providing a broader pool of candidates for consideration, or checking the candidate references beyond the scope of traditional academic criteria. However, the role of the search consultant should be clearly defined and should not extend into matters of educational or institutional policy. Search firms (which may be non-profit or for-profit organizations) and their consultants range from those that serve only educational institutions to those that have an education division within a large executive search firm. It is important to interview the potential search firms, preferably those staff members who would be assigned to the presidential search, to determine if the match is appropriate to the institutional characteristics and needs. References of the search firm candidates should be contacted. Among the questions that might be asked: How successful were they in previous searches? What were their interactions with faculty and other constituent groups? Do they understand and support the role of faculty in the search process?
- **Confidentiality.** The presidential selection process is a classic conflict between the right of individual privacy and the public's right to know. It is important for the campus community to know the procedures that the committee will use in the search process, and these should be made public early in the search. It is the responsibility of the search committee to keep constituent groups informed of the progress of the search. However, in order to attract the best candidates, the search process may involve some measure of confidentiality, especially during the early phases. The disclosure of candidates prior to the development of a short list of nominees to recommend to the board can result in the loss of the best candidates. However, to ensure a successful search, the nominees who are recommended to the board should visit the campus and be interviewed by the faculty and possibly other constituent groups. The approach to implementing confidentiality and the process and guidelines for campus visits are matters to be resolved early on in the search process.
- **Institutional Analysis and Leadership Criteria.** The search committee should spend some time defining the present condition of the college or university, determining what problems must be faced, what priorities the institution has, and what direction it must take to meet its challenges and opportunities. This institutional analysis is needed in order to determine the type of leadership qualities needed for this particular stage in the college or university's development. The leadership crite-

ria statement defines the principal qualities that are required in the new president—an academic leader, an experienced fund raiser, etc. The statement of leadership criteria should be circulated to various institutional constituencies for review and comment. Consensus within the campus community on the leadership qualities is important since these criteria are used in evaluating candidates' credentials and again in the interview process.

Sources of Potential Candidates

IN MOST INSTANCES, INSTITUTIONS engage in a comprehensive search. Casting the net broadly includes soliciting nominations from faculty, administrators, and alumni; running advertisements in national journals; and, if an executive recruiting firm is engaged, using the search consultant to identify candidates for review. The issue of confidentiality will again be raised during this step in the process since some nominees, particularly those who are currently successfully leading an institution, may not wish to be identified as candidates.

Screening

THE PURPOSE OF SCREENING IS TO IDENTIFY A LIMITED number of candidates from the applicant pool. In the first phase, the list is commonly reduced to fifteen to twenty-five names, in the second stage, to eight to ten names. The final stage of the process involves selecting candidates whom the committee will recommend to the board. Issues to be considered in the screening process are:

- **Background and reference checks.** The search committee may charge a subcommittee with checking the references of the fifteen to twenty-five candidates selected after the initial screening of credentials. These are generally the references provided by the candidate. In this phase of the search process, the committee usually refrains from contacting other possible sources of information out of respect for the candidate's privacy. In the case of the eight to ten candidates who become semi-finalists, additional sources of information beyond those listed by the candidate may be contacted. A search consultant may be useful at this point in the referencing process, particularly for

Casting the net broadly includes soliciting nominations from faculty, administrators, and alumni; running advertisements in national journals; and, if an executive recruiting firm is engaged, using the search consultant to identify candidates for review.



conducting criminal and media background checks. In the final phase of screening, anyone who might be able to provide useful information on the candidate's leadership qualifications should be contacted. Referencing by faculty members of the search committee who can contact their counterparts at the candidate's campus is particularly crucial at this stage. Background information at this point can be obtained not only from telephone calls but also from visits to the candidate's campus.

- **Interviewing.** The interviewing process may occur in two stages. In order to preserve confidentiality, there may be off-campus interviews with the semi-finalist candidates. Direct contact between the candidates and the search committee is important. The second stage of the interview process involves campus visits where the candidate will meet with different constituencies, particularly faculty and students. These open visits are crucial in the success of the search process because they permit members of the campus community to participate in providing impressions, as well as to contribute to the candidate's understanding of the culture of the institution. In this final phase of the selection process, open visits present vitally important opportunities for both the campus community and the candidate to determine each other's suitability. This final step is extraordinarily useful to the search committee in making its final recommendation to the board.

Final Recommendation

THE SEARCH COMMITTEE, DEPENDING ON ITS CHARGE, MAY recommend only one candidate to the board. A committee that has conscientiously fulfilled its duty will recognize the best candidate, one who "fits" the institution, and will be able to convince the board of the wisdom of its recommendation. On the other hand, a successful search committee may be able to identify three or more candidates who would make an excellent president. The final act in the search process is the appointment of the president, a decision usually made by the full board.

This checklist is intended as a brief guideline for the presidential search process. The search itself is an opportunity for a university or college to take stock, consider new directions, and identify the individual best suited to lead the institution into its future.

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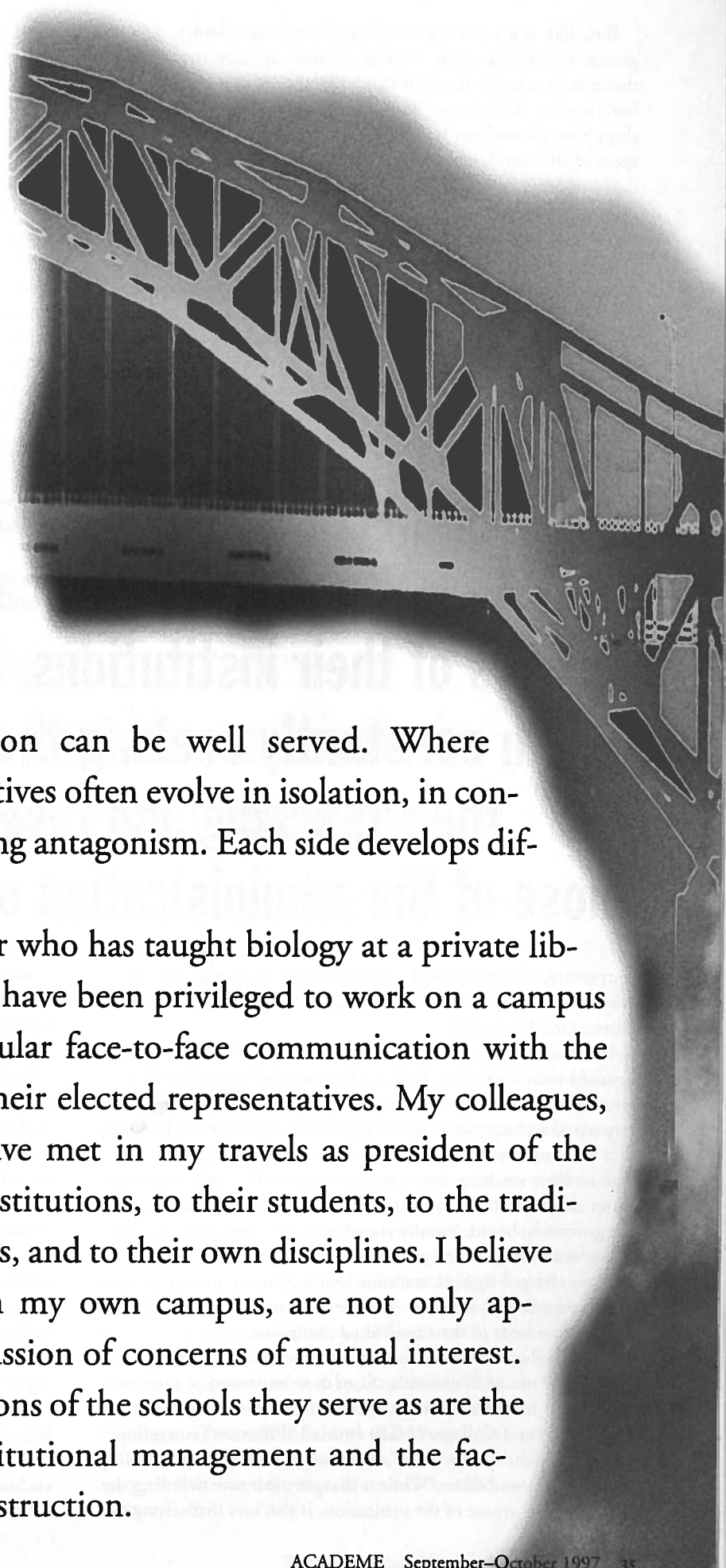
Building

BY JAMES E. PERLEY

THE TRADITION OF INSTITUTIONAL government that AAUP envisions for American colleges and universities is a tradition of interconnections among all the component parts of a complex community, whose many perspectives require consideration. In colleges and universities where such connections exist and are used, adversarial relationships can be avoided, common understandings can be reached about the directions of change, and the history

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Bridges



and traditions of the institution can be well served. Where such bridges collapse, the perspectives often evolve in isolation, in conflict, in an atmosphere of increasing antagonism. Each side develops different agendas.

I write as a faculty member who has taught biology at a private liberal arts college for thirty years. I have been privileged to work on a campus where faculty members have regular face-to-face communication with the members of the board through their elected representatives. My colleagues, like the many other faculty I have met in my travels as president of the AAUP, have been loyal to their institutions, to their students, to the traditions of their institutional histories, and to their own disciplines. I believe that most trustees, like those on my own campus, are not only approachable but also open to discussion of concerns of mutual interest. They are as dedicated to the missions of the schools they serve as are the administrators charged with institutional management and the faculty charged with research and instruction.

But, like other faculty members across the country, I have grown concerned about recent changes in governance that threaten to unsettle the delicate and vital relationships that have been in place during most of my academic career. These relationships have allowed our system of higher education to earn the respect of the world, after all. Nevertheless, we have recently been called upon to repel attacks on faculty, on faculty work, on traditions of governance and on established practice in the name of fiscal need. We have witnessed significant trustee incursions into areas of primary faculty responsibility—the curriculum, the standards for student work, and the recruitment and retention of faculty—in the name of responsibility of total stewardship of the institution. Faculty have been alarmed at the wholesale importation into the academic world of norms drawn from the world from which so many trustees and board members are now drawn—the world of the business community. Faculty worry that trustees will not only mandate the practices of business and seek uncritically to

mission statement is a “responsibility shared with a chief executive officer and faculty, perhaps with alumni and other stockholders as well.” It speaks of the involvement of faculty, students, and alumni leaders in the selection of a president, for example. The overall message of the report is that, while trustees have specific, defined responsibilities, the best interests of the institution call for mutual involvement in decision-making processes and cooperation in achieving common goals.

Yet in the same year that this thoughtful analysis of academic governance was published, the AGB cooperated with the Pew Foundation in the publication of a separate report entitled “Policy Perspectives: A Calling to Account,” which carried a very different message. This report called for restructuring, praising the benefits of “reengineering” while at the same time acknowledging its pain. This report urged faculty members to the impossible task of separating educational goals from defenses of academic freedom and integrity. It chastised those faculty members who are

It is important to understand that faculty members careers to higher education see themselves less officers of their institutions. Unlike their counterparts with constantly seeking the best for their disciplines their teaching and research—even if the values those of the administration or the governing board.

restructure, downsize, and outsource but may also use these wholesale strategies to intrude in areas of faculty expertise, like curriculum development.

It is important to understand that faculty members who have devoted their careers to higher education see themselves less as employees than as officers of their institutions. Unlike their counterparts in industry, they are charged with constantly seeking the best for their disciplines—the core of knowledge that they cultivate in their teaching and research—even if the values they advance may seem to be at odds with those of the administration or the governing board. Faculty members have a special responsibility to be involved in the governance of their institutions because they are charged by both tradition and practice to make sure that the standards and missions of their institutions mesh with the highest standards of their individual disciplines.

These values—indeed the whole notion of shared governance—are not at all dissimilar from those expressed in a publication issued in 1995 by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) entitled “Effective Trusteeship.” This document speaks to the roles trustees should play in fulfilling their responsibilities. While it charges trustees with setting the mission and purpose of the institution, it also says that setting the

“narrowly” committed only to their disciplines. Such statements stand in sharp contrast to those in the other AGB publication that warned against the conflict and confusion that can result from unilateral effort.

Faculty who have watched developments in governance over the past year know that “effective trusteeship” is collaborative. It is clear that the unilateral decision by the board of regents at the University of Minnesota to embark on a revision of the faculty code did not advance the best interests of the university. Their requirement that faculty members maintain a “proper attitude of industry and cooperation with others within and without the university community” created concerns and reservations about the existence of good-faith connections between faculty members and board members. The faculty who had worked so well for so long with their board had to take a second look at their own assumptions about bridges and common values. The decision by the president and board at Francis Marion University in South Carolina to dissolve the Faculty Senate and create a new governance body has created a chasm which may be unbridgeable.

Faculty members across the country are deeply distressed by such developments and, more significantly, by the dissolution of mutual respect for the work of each segment of the academy. The

disappearance of this respect may well result in a reduction in the degree to which faculty members are willing to share their lives with their institutions. That would be a tragedy, for that kind of sharing has made the world I've lived in as a professor a growing place for both students and faculty members.

Rifts between faculty and boards are not inevitable. They must be countered by establishing and maintaining regular lines of communication. When these are established, they reunite the university community. When we are able to communicate with one another directly, we prepare to regain the vital spirit of common dedication and a shared vision for our institutions.

If faculty members were to express their desires and concerns to boards of trustees, what might they say?

First and foremost, they would hope that relationships within the university might remain collegial—that there

who have devoted their as employees than as in industry, they are charged —the core of knowledge that they cultivate in they advance may seem to be at odds with


be respect in all segments of the academic world for the work done in each of the others. As a corollary, faculty would ask to maintain the partnership model that has served us so well. They would point to those sectors of the business community where the collegial model works better than the oppositional one.

Second, they would advocate strategies that permit the faculty and its representatives to communicate directly and on a regular basis between any one level of academic structure and any other. Faculty members feel the need to be able to communicate regularly with their board of trustees, as students need to be able to communicate regularly with administrators, for example. That communication should not only be frequent, it should be unfiltered and direct.

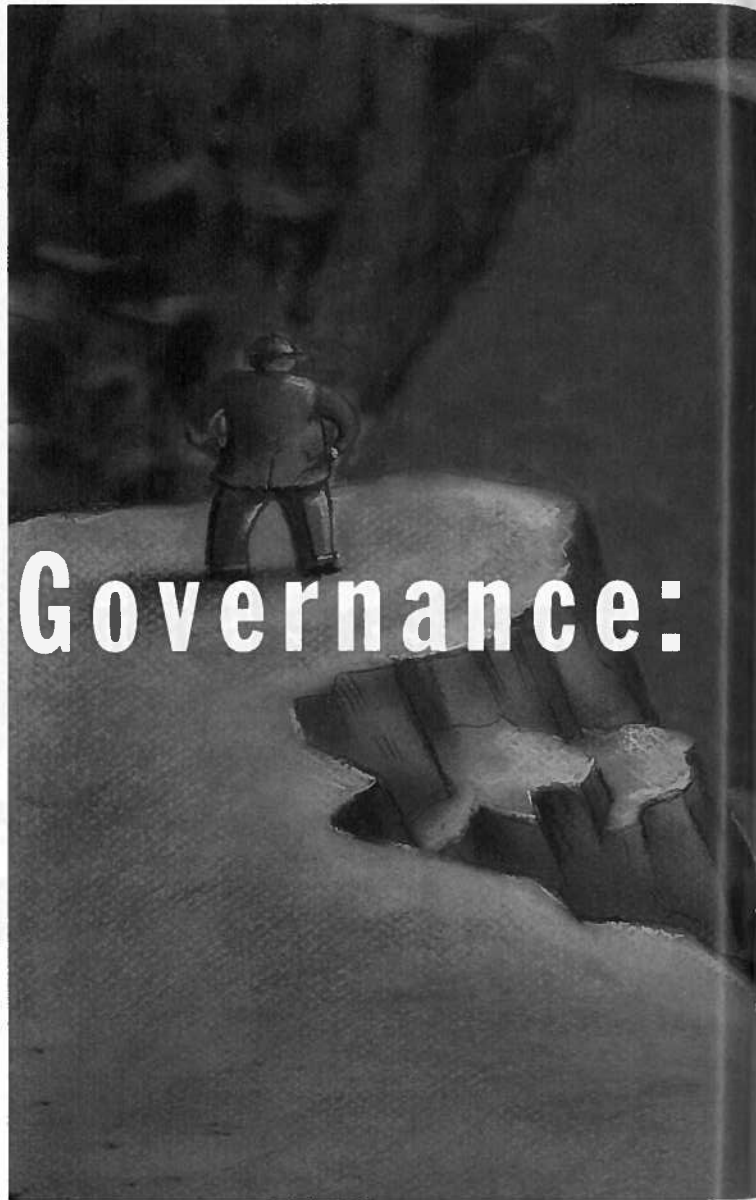
Thirdly, faculty members would express their desire for respect as builders of their schools. In many instances, faculty members have given their careers in service to their institutions, often without the compensation they could have earned in the business community. By the same token, the faculty are resources of good sense and shrewd policy. Sometimes, the advice given boards of trustees by their own faculty members may be more perceptive and functional than evaluations by consultants hired from off campus who have no continuing commitment to the institution. The current practice which stereotypes faculty

members as non-productive, overly theoretical, and hostile to change is not conducive to the harmonious work that will see our institutions into the future with dignity and grace.

Are there issues that need to be addressed by faculty members working together with members of governing boards? Yes, there are many. Distance learning and electronic instruction call for the best thinking of expert faculty members, working hand in hand with trustees and administrators. A new consensus needs to be cultivated as we question the distinction between training and education. It is time to discuss the whole area of accreditation. These are only a few of the subjects that faculty and boards can come together to discuss. But perhaps the most important thing we can talk about is our own relationship—how our two groups can bridge our different perspectives.

There is much to be done. And it is best accomplished by cooperation, not by the drawing of battle lines. As partners in a vital enterprise, faculty members, administrators, and trustees can together celebrate and help advance their institutions. If that can happen, society will be the winner. 

Reforming Shared Governance:



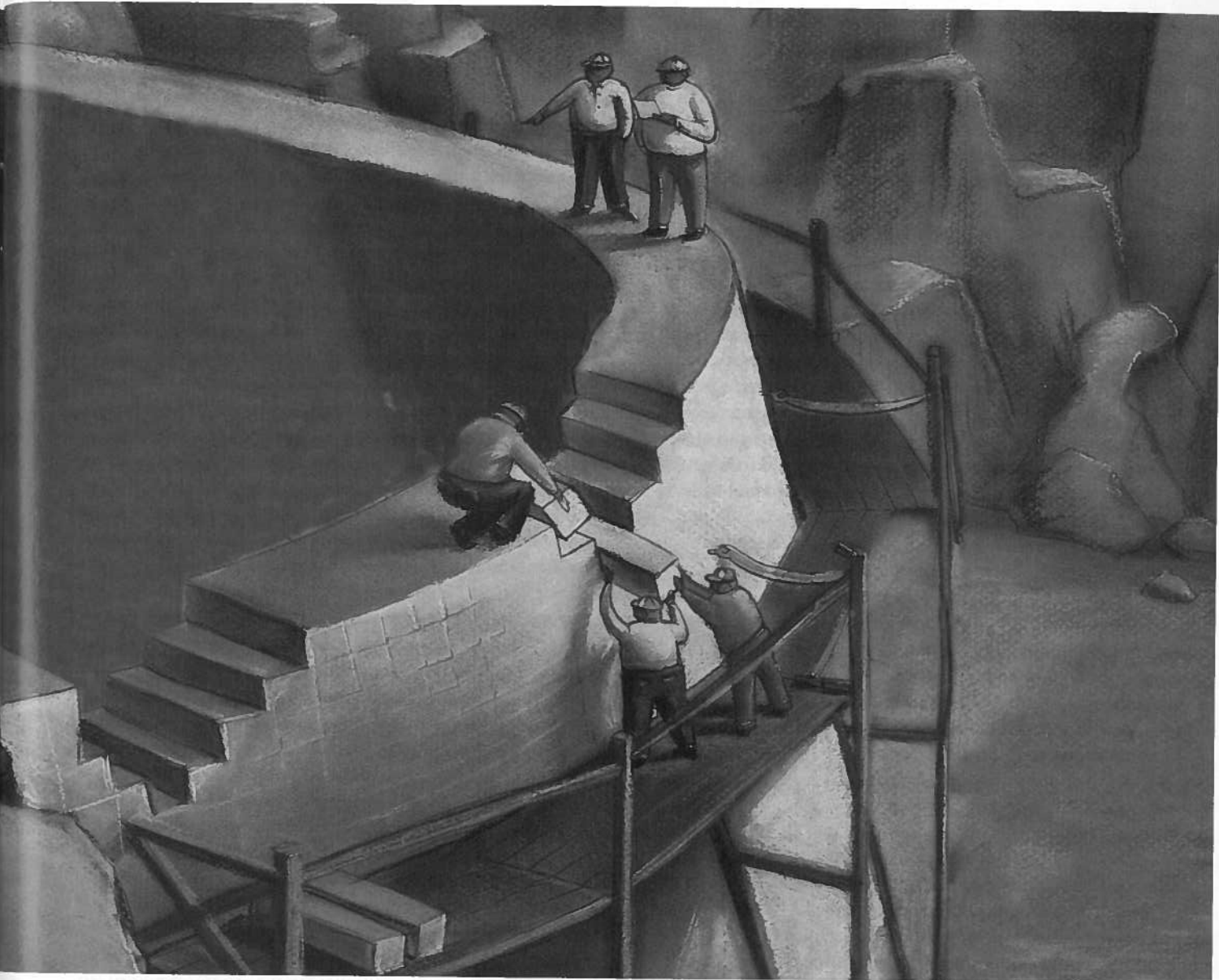
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IT IS NO REVELATION THAT HIGHER EDUCATION IS under attack in this country. After a long period of growth accompanied by high levels of public support, the trend toward expansion slowed and then reversed, with state appropriations for higher education going into an unprecedented decline beginning in the early nineties. This decline has been accompanied by criticisms in the public press that range from questions about the objectivity of scientific research to complaints that tuition increases in higher education have far outstripped increases in starting salaries for jobs requir-

ing college degrees. At the same time, the job instability caused by downsizing in corporate America has led to the public's increasing impatience with a tenure system they view as providing a privileged few with guarantees of lifetime employment. Furthermore, some criticize higher education as a dinosaur whose personnel and governance structures and practices are ill equipped to accommodate the need for flexibility and rapid responses to changing conditions in the social, technological, economic, and political environments.

No wonder, then, that individuals and associations are calling

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ents Hold Up?

BY KEETJIE RAMO

for the “retooling” of governance in the academy. What is cause for concern, however, is that most plans for retooling and restructuring aim to accomplish reform at the expense of the faculty’s role in governance.

This article examines some of the assumptions that underlie arguments that shared governance must be reformed, and on the basis of insight gained from the professional literature as well as direct observation and experience, counters the fallacies in—or one-sidedness of—these assumptions. The assumptions discussed here that bolster attacks on shared governance have been drawn from a variety of sources: direct comments by higher education insiders as well as other stakeholders; the literature on col-

lege and university governance; and reports and presentations that have directly targeted shared governance.

Among the most alarming of these calls for reform of university and college governance that attack shared governance in higher education is the 1996 report of the Commission on the Academic Presidency of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), “Renewing the Academic Presidency: Stronger Leadership for Tougher Times.” I will simply relate the central thesis of this AGB document. For a further discussion of the AGB report, see Larry Gerber’s article, “Reaffirming the Value of Shared Governance,” in this issue of *Academe*.

The central thesis of the AGB report seems to be the follow-

ing: American society is in a state of crisis, and the decline of higher education that is due in large measure to shared governance as it is presently practiced is contributing to the larger social crisis. Although the report acknowledges that state legislatures, "facing soaring health-care and corrections costs, have cut university budgets," it still alleges that the "greatest danger" in these times is not the budget cuts themselves, but rather the inability of colleges and universities to adapt "nimble" to changing circumstances; "The concept of shared governance must be reformed and clarified... The need for governance reform is urgent." (*Renewing the Academic Presidency: Stronger Leadership for Tougher Times*, Association of Governing Boards, 1996.) The commission's thesis is not a joyful message for the professoriate. Rather, the AGB thesis exemplifies some of the victim-blaming mentality that accompanies attacks on shared governance.

Here are some other assumptions that are used to attack shared governance in its present form, as well as some rebuttals:

Assumption 1: If old-fashioned bureaucracy is good for the Acme Widget Manufacturing Company, then it is undoubtedly good for Midwest State University.

Rebuttal: This statement represents a very widely held assumption. In fact, some critics warn that if higher education does not get its act together, for-profit business will step into the void and do the job better. Strangely, this warning sometimes comes from persons who cite tuition increases as one of the major problems in public higher education. Do these critics think that for-profit business can deliver high-quality accredited education at discount store tuition rates and still make a profit?

On the other hand, there is certainly ample evidence that higher tuition costs come not from "outmoded" shared governance, but rather from factors such as reduced state funding, higher demands for the infusion of technology that must constantly be upgraded, and administrative bloat caused by, among other things, the increasing complexity of the organizational environment. For example, financial aid regulations and processes have become so complicated that ever-increasing numbers of personnel are needed to deal with the accompanying red tape.

Criticism of the notion that colleges and universities should be run according to the corporate model comes from a diverse array of sources and contradicts the "university-as-business" assumption. For example, in an interview, "Lebowitz on Money," which appeared in the July 1997 issue of *Vanity Fair*, Fran Lebowitz scoffs at the notion. "People seem to think that these [businesses and public education] are similar in some way. If they ran the public school system the way you run your business, people would be even less educated than they are now, because the purpose of business is to earn a profit. This is not the purpose of education."

Taking another approach is Robert L. Woodbury, former chancellor of the University of Maine System and member of the board of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and present director of the McCormack Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. In a short essay in the March 23, 1993, *Christian Science Monitor*, Woodbury

noted that higher education does, in fact, incorporate important lessons from the business sector. Even so, the title of his article asks, "Why Not Run a Business Like a Good University?"

Woodbury's argument is based on the research that shows that higher education in the United States continues to be one of our most successful "industries." As evidence, he noted (1) that our higher education system is universally recognized as the world's best; (2) that American higher education's favorable balance of payments (in 1993) was over \$5 billion and growing; (3) that higher education has been in an expansion mode for decades; (4) that despite some notable exceptions, higher education's "overall record of fiscal stewardship" is exemplary; (5) that no other industry can attract and retain such a wealth of educated talent at such a low cost; (6) that despite the perceptions of the public to the contrary, universities and colleges consistently provide a high quality total living and learning experience for students at a surprisingly low cost; and (7) that the return on society's and a family's investments is "envious" (for individuals, a 50 percent lifetime income advantage over non-degreed workers; not to mention the benefits to society that accrue from university research and service).

Citing shared governance as one of the crucial differences between higher education and many corporations, Woodbury con-

cluded that businesses should be modeling their operations on universities rather than the other way around. The real truth, however, may lie somewhere between the positions of Lebowitz and Woodbury. On the one hand, corporations and institutions of higher education *do* have divergent goals. On the other hand, the more that corporations are staffed with professional personnel, the more those corporations will need to adapt structures and practices to optimize the intellectual, creative, and educational resources these personnel bring to the organization. (This point will be expanded upon below.)

Assumption 2: Democratic decision-making is undermining the effective management of colleges and universities.

Rebuttal: This assumption is a straw man set up by opponents of shared governance who presumably know better or, alternatively, have seriously misconstrued the traditional rationale for shared governance. Actually, scholars of higher education have never justified shared governance strictly in terms of democratic values. Instead, shared governance was founded on two principles: the nature of the professions and the protection of academic freedom.

There is an extensive body of literature on the unique nature of organizations that are staffed primarily by members of the professions, and on the unique nature of the academy as a particular example of such organizations. In brief, a career that can be defined as professional according to sociological criteria is characterized by (for example) extensive, long-term, specialized formal education and a relatively esoteric knowledge base; a service orientation that puts the needs of the clientele before profit or personal motives; a sense of a professional community and culture; and commitment to a set of ethics and standards.¹ (Interestingly, lacking the necessary service orientation and code of ethics, administration *per se* does not constitute a profession by these criteria.)

Criticism of the notion that colleges and universities should be run according to the corporate model comes from a diverse array of sources and contradicts the "university-as-business" assumption.

Professional status is accorded to those occupations to which society entrusts crucial facets of the well-being of its citizens: health care and maintenance (medicine); spiritual development (the clergy); protection of civil rights (the law); transmission of the culture, and discovery, development, and dissemination of knowledge (higher education); and national defense (military leadership). Because of this trust and responsibility, members of the professions are expected—indeed, obligated—to exercise their individual and collective professional judgment based on their specialized knowledge, experience, ethics, and values as to what constitutes acceptable practice in their fields. Since the administration of the institutions within which professionals dominate inevitably affects professional practice, it follows that if professional judgment regarding good practice is to prevail and be protected from changing politics and administrative oligarchies, then professional personnel must have a very strong voice in government.

In the academy, the urgency of this need for a professional voice in institutional government is accompanied by the need for structural and procedural protections for freedom of expression and the unfettered pursuit of knowledge by those whose professional mission is to seek and transmit the truth in their disciplines as they understand it. In other words, shared governance is necessary to protect and preserve academic freedom.

Academic freedom is threatened where the faculty's traditional governance roles are ignored; and true shared governance is unlikely where the faculty's traditional freedoms of scholarly and artistic inquiry and expression are threatened.

This necessary linkage of academic freedom and shared governance is discussed in AAUP's statement, *On the Relationship of Faculty Governance to Academic Freedom*, which asserts that "a sound statement of institutional governance is a necessary condition for the protection of faculty rights and thereby the most productive exercise of essential faculty freedoms. Correspondingly, the protection of the academic freedom of faculty members in addressing issues of institutional governance is a prerequisite for the practice of governance unhampered by fear of retribution."

In other words, neither in principle nor in practice is shared governance democratic, except to the extent that the position the faculty takes on an issue may be determined by a faculty vote. No one who understands higher education would suggest that power is equally distributed among trustees, administrators, and faculty. Instead, at the level at which the faculty, administration, and governing board deal jointly with policy matters, decision-making, in the ideal, is participative, not democratic, and the administration and board clearly have the upper hand. Shared governance founded in academic freedom simply helps to ensure the infusion of professional—in addition to managerial—considerations into those decisions that affect the teaching and research mission of the institution.

As Louis Menand points out in his essay, "The Limits of Academic Freedom," academic freedom (not democracy) is "the key legitimating concept of the entire [academic] enterprise," forming the basis for virtually all convention in the academy. With-

out academic freedom, he argues, governance would be "a political free-for-all, in which decisions about curricula, funding, employment, classroom practice, and scholarly merit are arrived at through a process of negotiation among competing interests... The power in such a negotiation," he dryly observes, would "not be wielded by professors."²

Assumption 3: The effective academic chief executive officer is one who shows the faculty and staff who is in charge.

Rebuttal: In fact, much of the professional literature on leadership and management suggests otherwise. For example, Amitai Etzioni argues that the administrator-as-hero model of decision-making (a model which carries the expectation that the president will possess strong scientific management skills and the ability to protect and save the institution from threats to its integrity, survival, and mission) is an inappropriate model for prescribing the distribution of authority in academic institutions—organizations peopled primarily by highly educated professionals. As Etzioni points out: "It is here that Weber overlooked one necessary distinction: He viewed bureaucratic or administrative authority as based on technical knowledge or training; the subordinates, he thought, accept rules and orders as legitimate because they consider being rational being right,

and regard their superiors as more rational."

In higher education, the failure of faculty to assume the rationality of administrators (to oversimplify grossly the argument) and the accompanying assumption by administrators and governing boards of the subordination of the faculty in decision-making contribute to the stresses of shared governance.

In justifying his position, Etzioni states:

Only if immune from ordinary social pressures and free to innovate, to experiment, to take risks without the usual social repercussions of failure, can a professional carry out his work effectively. It is this highly individualized principle which is diametrically opposed to the

very essence of the organizational principle of control and coordination by superiors—i.e., the principle of administrative authority. In other words, the ultimate justification for a professional act is that it is, to the best of the professional's knowledge, the right act. He might consult with his colleagues before he acts, but the decision is his. If he errs, he still will be defended by his peers. The ultimate justification of an administrative act, however, is that it is in line with the organization's rules and regulations, and that it has been approved—directly or by implication—by a superior rank.³

Etzioni's discussion centers on governance of institutions of higher education. Ironically, though, at a time when legislators, trustees, and administrators are bemoaning the absence of top-down bureaucratic "efficiency" in colleges and universities, enlightened management experts are advocating a less top-down, more "professional" model for corporations.

For example, Warren Bennis, in the introduction to the 1994 paperback edition of his 1989 classic study on leadership, *Becoming a Leader*, writes that intellectual capital is what will

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give present and future organizations the competitive edge and the ability to prevail. He notes that corporations of the future will sink or swim on the "ideas, know-how, innovation, brains, knowledge, and expertise" of their workforce, and concludes that "you're not going to attract or retain a work force like that under those *silly and obsolete* [emphasis added] forms of bureaucratic or command and control leadership. You cannot release the brain power of any organization by using whips and chains. You get the best out of people by empowering them, by supporting them, by getting out of their way." (Addison-Wesley, 1994)

The examples continue. To wit, William Davidow and

Michael Malone, in *The Virtual Corporation: Restructuring and Revitalizing the Corporation for the 21st Century*, insist that modern corporations will have to redefine the role of management from "directing action to ensuring the smooth functioning of processes," and that in successful companies, organizational charts will become much flatter. They warn: "...recall that today's hierarchical and directive management systems were designed to control the railroads and the mass production factories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They are a legacy of the past...designed in an era when computers did not exist. These systems are as obsolete for modern flexible and responsive environments as are the buggy whip and horse-drawn carriage." (Harper Business, 1993)

Similarly, Richard Jenrette, in *Jenrette, the Contrarian Manager*, writes that the successful companies he helped build and staff with brilliant, well-educated personnel had to have relatively horizontal organizational structures. Jenrette has an aversion to top-down structures: "They tend to stifle creativity on the front lines since all wisdom is perceived to flow from above." (McGraw-Hill, 1997)

The implication of these examples is that college and university presidents (as well as business leaders) must foster governance models that move away from hierarchical administration.

While the model of the administrative hero who unilaterally develops—and directs the realization of—the institutional vision is not totally absent from the current literature, it certainly does not predominate.

Assumption 4: The faculty's resistance to new technology impedes necessary innovation in higher education.

Rebuttal: This allegation flies in the face of experience, and it is doubtful that critics could cite many instances where faculty governance stood in the path of technological innovation. Take computer technology, for example. My institution has a small contingent of faculty computer "hobbyists," who are motivated by interest, talent, and/or enjoyment and have spent a great deal of "leisure time" mastering the instructional and research potential of computer technology. Another small contingent consists of technophobes, who ignore computers and produce their work by pencil and pad.

The largest group of faculty, though, is more or less computer-literate, would like to develop more expertise in computer technology, and would welcome being able to use this technology for instruction. However, they are frequently hampered by time constraints (e.g., large courseloads and classes, pressures to publish, committee work, and time conflicts between computer training op-

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portunities and other professional demands); inadequate computer resources (e.g., heavy student demands in student computer labs, heavy faculty demands for a limited number of "wired" classrooms, and unreasonably slow Internet access for students who must rely on a university connection); and inadequate training and consultation resources (e.g., paucity of "entry-level" computer workshops for faculty; focus on specialized training opportunities that assume a level of computer sophistication beyond that of many faculty members; thinly stretched support staff). Similar barriers exist to the development of high quality distance education programs, but the issues surrounding distance education are too complex to be adequately dealt with here.

Introduction of new technology must be accompanied by intensive faculty development, up-to-date equipment and software, adequate access for students, and adequate support services. The lack of these resources and opportunities is a funding issue and is not generally a function of resistant faculty governance.

Assumption 5: Public universities and colleges must be able to respond instantaneously to changing demands and circumstances, including the strategic objectives of the state.

Rebuttal: This assumption as an implied criticism of shared governance is bound to cause many of us to wince, since those of us who are active in institutional governance recognize that some issues move through a faculty senate like (as a former colleague put it) "a pebble in a glacier." In the faculty governance structures of many institutions issues are brought to the senate as information items at one meeting, as discussion items at the next, and as action items at the third. This process allows faculty senators to solicit responses from their respective constituents before taking action on any item. Yet in terms of timeliness, it is potentially problematic, especially at institutions where senates meet monthly or even less frequently.

Nevertheless, as a member of my senate's executive committee who has spent a good part of my unpaid break this summer meeting often with my colleagues to deal with an emergent situation that had the potential to embarrass the administration, I can attest to the faculty's ability to be nimble when the occasion warrants. Similarly, the rapidity with which faculty can produce a grant proposal when a sudden funding opportunity arises never ceases to amaze me.

In spite of faculty governance's reputation for slowness, I was unable to recall a single example from my eight or nine years of governance experience of an emergency that was not handled or an opportunity that was lost to the institution because the wheels of faculty government ground too slowly. I can, however, recount examples when faculty governance processes were bypassed by administrators with unhappy results in terms of the appropriateness or wisdom of the resulting decisions.

These arguments aside, faculty have good reason to be wary of criticisms that shared governance is too unwieldy to address the "strategic objectives of the state" in an expeditious way. Since the strategic objectives of the state are almost always grounded in political agendas, and since trustees of public institutions are

usually political appointees, questions must certainly be raised regarding how higher education is to tread the fine line between appropriately addressing legitimate and pressing societal issues and being diverted from its mission by transient political priorities. How, if at all, will this question be debated if not in the context of shared governance?

Conclusion

MY FORTHCOMING AAUP-SPONSORED PUBLICATION, "Assessing the Faculty's Role in Shared Governance: Implications of Redbook Standards," summarizes and cross-references the broad array of governance standards contained within the AAUP's *Policy Documents and Reports*, including the centrally important 1966 "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities."

Briefly summarized, the "Statement on Government" clearly acknowledges the ultimate *de jure* decision-making authority and responsibility of the governing board, but it also calls for collaboration among the board, the president, and the faculty and shared responsibility in those areas of governance in which they all have a legitimate interest. The board is expected to delegate everyday administration of the institution to the administrative officers, and to recognize the primacy of the faculty in the areas of curriculum, teaching, research, and faculty status. According to the statement, the governing board and president are expected to concur with the faculty's judgment in those areas in which the faculty has primacy, "except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail."

Calls for the reform of the governance of colleges and universities are based on the premise that shared governance in its present form places higher education, if not society, at risk. However well-intentioned, these reform proposals put higher education at risk by weakening protections of academic freedom and reducing the influence of faculty expertise in the management of the academy.

As faculty encounter these calls for reform, we must critically analyze the assumptions on which they are based and encourage others who have a stake in higher education to do the same. When subjected to such scrutiny, most of the arguments used to question the faculty's role in governance do not hold up well; yet their effect, when they go unchallenged, is to exacerbate the very erosion of trust in the academy that they are designed to reduce. ☞

Notes

¹Ernest Greenwood, "Attributes of a Profession," *Social Work* 2 (July 1957) pp. 44-55.

²Louis Menand, "The Limits of Academic Freedom," in Menand (ed.), *The Future of Academic Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) p. 4.

³Amitai Etzioni, "Administrative and Professional Authority," in M.W. Peterson (ed.), *Organization and Governance in Higher Education: An ASHE Reader*, 4th edition (Needham Heights: Ginn Press, 1991) pp. 441-448.

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