

AAUP Community College Shared Governance Assessment Tool

For Community Colleges Without a Tenure System

The purpose of this assessment tool is to facilitate individual community colleges in gaining an understanding of shared governance by providing insights into faculty authority and administrative collaboration in twenty-six areas of academic decision-making. National findings from the inaugural 2024 AAUP Community College Shared Governance Survey and additional context are reported in “The 2024 AAUP Community College Shared Governance Survey: Findings on Faculty Authority by Decision-Making Areas” in the *AAUP Bulletin*; however, caution should be exercised when comparing with those results given the small sample size of the inaugural survey. Those findings are based on a survey of one respondent (senate chairs or faculty governance leaders in a similar role) at each of a simple random sample of 507 institutions, with an overall response rate of 12 percent.

This survey instrument mirrors the one used in 2021 for four-year institutions, examining faculty authority across twenty areas of institutional decision-making. (Three areas included in the 2021 survey instrument did not apply to community colleges, and six areas do not apply to institutions without a tenure system.) National findings from the 2021 survey of four-year institutions are reported in “The 2021 AAUP Shared Governance Survey: Findings on Faculty Roles by Decision-Making Areas” in the *AAUP Bulletin*.

Instructions

In 1994, Professor Keetje Ramo, a member of the AAUP’s Committee on College and University Governance, provided instructions for a governance survey instrument she had created that bear repeating here. She stressed that

using the instrument as a satisfaction survey will render the results meaningless. The questions are intended to reflect observable conditions at colleges and universities. It is not designed to measure the faculty’s opinion of or satisfaction with those conditions. For that reason, the ratings should come from those faculty members who have had fairly intensive experience in governance. This usually means faculty leadership, senate experience, and regular formal contacts with academic officers [and] the governing board. I recommend that a small group of faculty members with such experience fill out the questionnaire by consensus to improve reliability.

Along the lines of Professor Ramo’s recommendation, this questionnaire is best completed by a group of four to six faculty members with significant experience in governance. Ideally, the members of the group should agree on the level of relative authority for each area of decision-making. If there are disagreements about the level of authority in particular areas, it would be helpful to explore how each member of the group arrived at their respective assessment and to attempt to reconcile differences of opinion.

Definitions

Scale: For each of the twenty-nine areas, please assess the level of authority using the following scale. The terms employed in the scale are defined below.

1. Faculty dominance
2. Faculty primacy
3. Joint authority
4. Administrative primacy
5. Administrative dominance

Dominance: This level of participation means that a group is making decisions in an area essentially unilaterally. The other group is informed of the decision or consulted in a pro forma fashion but generally has no influence on the outcome.

Primacy: This level of participation means that a group has primary authority for an area but that the other group has an opportunity to participate meaningfully in the final decision. If there is disagreement between the two groups, the group that has primacy normally prevails.

Joint Authority: This level of participation means that both groups exercise equal influence in making decisions in an area. If an area is subject to collective bargaining between a union and the administration or board, the level of faculty participation should presumably be “joint authority.”

Faculty: If decisions in a particular area are made by the department chair or head, they should be considered as being made by the faculty if heads or chairs are chosen by departmental election on a regular schedule. Otherwise, faculty participation needs to occur through an elected senate or council, or else through the general faculty.

Administration: Deans, associate deans, provosts, associate provosts, etc. should be regarded as administration, regardless of whether they may hold faculty rank. Department chairs or heads that are not chosen by departmental election on a regular schedule should be regarded as administration.

Other Instructions

Order of Forms of Participation: Although the order of the forms of participation listed here are in descending degree of faculty participation, it is not meant to imply that “faculty dominance” is considered more desirable than the other categories for all questions listed.

Institutional Governance: If the faculty participates in governance at the level of a statewide system, please restrict your responses to the institutional level.

Differences between Units: In some areas, there may be differences in the level of faculty participation between colleges, schools, or departments. In that case, please respond with what you believe is the most common level of faculty participation among units.

Actual Practice vs. Institutional Regulations: In judging the level of faculty participation, please assess the actual practice as employed on campus rather than how the level of faculty participation is specified in institutional regulations or bylaws.

Assessment Tool

For each of the following areas of decision making, please provide your assessment of the level of faculty participation.

A. Personnel Decisions

1. Searches for full-time faculty members.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

2. Evaluation of full-time faculty members for reappointment.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

3. Setting standards for promotions of full-time faculty members. *Note: If the faculty is represented by a union and promotion standards are subject to bargaining, the answer should reflect the role of the faculty union.*

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance
- No rank/promotion system for full-time faculty members exists at the institution

4. Individual promotion decisions for full-time faculty members.
 - Faculty dominance
 - Faculty primacy
 - Joint authority
 - Administrative primacy
 - Administrative dominance
 - No rank/promotion system for full-time faculty members exists at the institution

5. Searches for part-time faculty members (such as adjunct faculty).
 - Faculty dominance
 - Faculty primacy
 - Joint authority
 - Administrative primacy
 - Administrative dominance

6. Evaluation of part-time faculty members (such as adjunct faculty) for reappointment.
 - Faculty dominance
 - Faculty primacy
 - Joint authority
 - Administrative primacy
 - Administrative dominance

7. Allocation of faculty positions to divisions, departments or programs.
 - Faculty dominance
 - Faculty primacy
 - Joint authority
 - Administrative primacy
 - Administrative dominance

B. Academic Decisions

8. Program-level curricular decisions, including the approval of individual courses and major requirements.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

9. Establishment of new academic programs.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

10. Institutional curricular decisions (general education/distribution requirements, minimum/maximum number of requirements in major, etc.).

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

11. Grade assignments to individual students.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

12. Decisions about facilities and buildings (such as demolitions, new constructions, renovations, etc.).

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

13. Selection of the vice president for academic affairs, provost, or equivalent.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

14. Selection of division, department or program chairs or heads.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

15. Faculty salary policies. *Note: If the faculty is represented by a union and promotion standards are subject to bargaining, the answer should reflect the role of the faculty union.*

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

C. Administrative Decisions

16. Policies regarding teaching loads. *Note: If the faculty is represented by a union and promotion standards are subject to bargaining, the answer should reflect the role of the faculty union.*

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

17. Institutional budgetary planning.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

18. Institutional strategic planning.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

19. Teaching assignments of individual faculty members.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance

20. Institutional policies concerning mode of course delivery, including online learning.

- Faculty dominance
- Faculty primacy
- Joint authority
- Administrative primacy
- Administrative dominance