



Shared Governance at BCC: What's Going On?

by Dr. Alan Kaufman

I: What Is Shared Governance?

At its March 15, 2005 meeting, the Faculty Senate created a sub-committee of the Senate "to come up with a shared governance statement." (See March 15, 2005 minutes on the Faculty Senate web page: <http://www.bergen.edu/facultyhome/senate.asp>.) This sub-committee, which then Senate Chairperson Dr. George Cronk asked me to chair, went beyond this charge and produced a document calling for a written shared governance policy for BCC. Upon its completion, this policy was shared with the Senate at its November 15, 2005 meeting and afterward sent to President Winn for her consideration (November 15 minutes).

Why was such a policy called-for, and why at this particular moment? Reading Faculty Senate minutes throughout this period can provide the reader with a sense of what led to the establishment of such a sub-committee. Suffice it to say that the Senate was concerned about what it regarded as intrusions into faculty prerogatives in the governance process by the administration. Also, however, we were in the midst of a Middle-States Self-Study and governance, one of the specific areas to be studied, was coming under increasing scrutiny. (As a member of the Self-Study Steering Committee [ah, lucky me!] I had been asked to chair the Governance and Administration sub-committee.) Finally, our last Self-Study, in the mid-1990s, had pointed to some problems in the College's governance structure.

Shared Governance is the traditional system under which colleges and universities govern themselves. It is a system, in theory, in which each of the major constituencies of a college or university offer their expertise in the best interests of the successful governance of the institution. So Boards of Trustees, for instance, often comprised of men and women with experience in the business world, make decisions about how a college allocates its funds. The faculty, in such a system, makes decisions in areas such as curriculum development.

According to the report of the Faculty Senate sub-committee, shared governance "is a 'joint effort' in the development of policy decisions among the faculty, staff, administration, and governance board of a college. Such a system recognizes and follows democratic rather than hierarchical processes of governance. A system of shared governance calls on all college constituencies to work cooperatively and in good faith to advance the college's mission, and is based on collegiality, mutual trust, open communications, civility, and accountability on the part of all participants."

The classic statement on shared governance is the report on "College and University Government" of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), produced in 1966 (<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/governancestatement.htm>). This report was the culmination of the AAUP's process of defining shared governance that dated back to 1920. Forty years to develop and then refine this statement illustrates the importance of shared governance to colleges. The Faculty Senate sub-committee on shared governance relied on this important statement, as well as National Education Association's Policy Statement on "Faculty Governance in Higher Education" (<http://www2.nea.org/he/policy6.html>), and the shared governance policies of other colleges and universities, in composing our proposal. Dr. Winn and I continue, in the midst of significant obstacles, to work on designing a

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written shared governance policy for BCC. According to the *BCC Faculty Constitution*, "Subject to the ultimate authority of the Board of Trustees, the General Faculty is self-governing" (*Preamble*, 1). (The *Faculty Constitution* is available on the Faculty Senate web page: <http://www.bergen.edu/facultyhome/senate.asp>.) So what should the appropriate responsibilities be for the BCC faculty in a shared governance system? It seems apparent to me that the faculty must be responsible for all curricular matters. This includes the addition and deletion of new and outdated courses and curricula, the design of course syllabi and methods of classroom instruction. The faculty further should oversee degree and certification requirements, educational outcomes, academic standards, and all aspects of a vigorous Faculty Development program. The faculty should also, in our consultative role, have significant input into decisions about the hiring and retention of faculty, full- as well as part-time, into tenure decisions and decisions about sabbaticals and promotions, and into the selection of members of the administration through our appropriate part in the search process. We should, finally, provide input into long-range planning for the college as well as into budgeting priorities and the allocation of resources. In other words, the faculty should have significant input into decision-making on *all* matters at the college.

When the faculty assumes and carries out our appropriate responsibilities, and all other factions in a shared governance system do the same, an academic institution can flourish. Colleges and universities are best served when they engage not in conflict models of management, but, as AAUP puts it, in a "joint effort" at governance.

II: *Our Presidential Search*

Unfortunately, there is cause for concern about shared governance at BCC today. Difficulties have arisen surrounding the search for a new president of the college. As of this moment, the search for a new president gives no evidence of being a joint effort.

When the last presidential search was conducted, and resulted in the hiring of Dr. Judith Winn as the fourth President of BCC, a large search committee was formed. Three faculty members were included on this committee as were representatives from all sectors of the college community. The Board of Trustees has unfortunately organized the process for this search very differently, having approved a new policy at their December 2006 meeting. Now there are to be two committees. There is a Search Committee consisting of four members—the members of the Board's Personnel Committee. They will interview candidates and recommend finalists for the position. In addition to the Search Committee, there is an "advisory committee" whose charge will be to read resumes and send forth names to the Search Committee, which will choose whom to interview from that list. The advisory committee is to include two faculty members from a list that is to be submitted to the Board by the Faculty Senate. The Board will then select from this list those two members to sit on the advisory committee**. Other sectors of the college community—administrators, students, support staff members, et cetera—will be selected in the same way; names are to be sent to the Board, the Board will select who is to sit on the advisory committee.

At its December 2006 meeting, the Faculty Senate discussed the new Presidential Search guidelines. There was consternation about the lack of input being provided to the faculty, and the Senate passed a motion asking the Board to return to its previous search policy—the one that had been in effect for the last Presidential Search. The Support Staff Union, the Professional Staff union, and the Student Government Association all support the motion passed by the Faculty Senate. The membership of the BCCFA, at its January 11, 2006 meeting, also supported the position taken by the Senate. There is, as you can see, considerable unanimity across campus that the search is being conducted in an unsupportable, indeed an unfathomable, way—that serious input is, as of this moment, being denied to all members of the college community except for Board members.

When the Board of Trustees last met, on January 3, 2007, the Board Chair reiterated the new search policy. He maintained, correctly, that the Board of Trustees has as one of its statutory responsibilities the job of selecting a president for the College. He asserted that the Board has created a search policy that can best insure that the search process be untainted by political interference. The Board Chair further stated that the newly-approved search process will provide significant feedback to all elements of the college community. By the actions they took at their most recent meetings, both the Faculty Senate and the membership of the BCCFA—which includes just about the entire BCC full-time faculty—clearly disagreed with this last assertion.

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“PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES . . .

. . . and smile, smile, smile.”

You have access to Association advocates!

by Professor Mauro Marzocco

Do you feel that you have been unfairly harmed and injured? When the Administration and its representatives either do something they were not supposed to do, or omitted something they were supposed to do, you should call upon your Association for help. Filing a Complaint or a Grievance may succeed in restoring your work integrity; that is, returning you to the status you would have held had the violation not occurred.

Initial discussions with your grievance officer will serve to analyze the incident and explore the possible avenues for remedy. Very often, the problem or issue can be resolved informally on your behalf by your Association. Occasionally, the more intractable problems will need to be prepared as a formal grievance.

Among the benefits of consulting your Association representative for help are:

1. Your problem will receive expert attention.
2. The integrity of the Contract will be maintained, and protection against continued violations can be put into place.

Sometimes, simply discussing your concerns with an Association representative can help to interpret the situation in a more comfortable light, one not so troubling. Other times, formulating a definitive defense regarding the improper, unfair, arbitrary, or discriminating aspects of your complaint can restore your hope for better times ahead.

Your initial report will be handled with the degree of confidentiality that you wish. Further action as may mutually be decided upon will be dealt with discreetly. Please contact Professor Mauro Marzocco, Chairman of the BCCFA Grievance Committee, by e-mail at mmarzocco@bergen.edu.

Editor’s Note: This is the first of a series of articles that will address various aspects of labor economics, unionism, and the BCCFA itself.

*The BCCFA Executive Committee and the Representative Assembly thank **Professor Denise Jerman**, our former Vice-President, for her excellent years of service to the BCCFA and its constituents.*

Thank you!!

Remember that this is your newsletter. If you have any questions that you would like to see discussed, or if there are any issues that you would like to see addressed in future editions, or if you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please contact Toby De Marco (ext. 9282, tdemarco@bergen.edu) .

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UNION MATTERS

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Treasurer's Report
by
Laurie W. Hodge

It is my pleasure to inform you of the state of our finances as of September 1, 2006. At the beginning of this academic year, we had \$73,197.00 in our treasury. Projected income this year, primarily from dues, will be approximately \$226,646.00. Expenditures – dues paid to NEA, NJEA, and BCEA, bills, socials, the newsletter, and stipends for the members of the executive committee – will total approximately \$213,814.00. Expected balance will be \$86,029.00.

BCC Softball

by Professor Michael Echols

As winter is here, we all think about getting that new ice scraper for the car, gassing up the snow blower, and, of course....**SOFTBALL!**

It's never too early to e-mail me, or Charlie Stelling, about your interest in the 2007 BCC Faculty/Staff Co-ed Softball team! We play from April to August in the Bergen County Corporate Co-ed Softball League, and when it comes to enjoying some fun in the sun with your Faculty/Staff colleagues, it is second to none! All of you are eligible, and everyone who comes to the game will play! The team is as diverse as our BCC community. Last year our starting line-up could include a Public Safety Officer at 3rd base, an Academic Counselor at SS, a Math professor at 1st base, our vaunted Union Leader on the mound, an Art professor at lead-off, a CIT specialist batting 3rd, a Dean in right field, and many more! Send me an e-mail any-time between now and March (mehols@bergen.edu), and I'll consider you ready to play come April. Whether we win or lose, the fun is guaranteed!

Keep in touch with faculty matters...
www.bergen.edu/facultyhome

BCCFA WEB PAGE

The BCCFA has a website. It was designed by George Cronk, our former Association Secretary and Website Manager. The Technical Consultants to the site are Anita Verno and Bill Madden. To access the site, simply go to the Faculty Home Page and click on BCC Faculty Association, or log on to www.bergen.edu/bccfa. Check it out, and contact George with any questions and/or suggestions for content.

The Board of Trustees of BCC meets on the first Wednesday of every month. The meetings begin at 5:00 PM. The first part of the meeting is public (required by law). A second part of the meeting, which is called "executive session," is optional and is not open to the public. The last part of the meeting, after the executive session, is public again.

*Be involved!!
Attend these meetings!!*

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We believe that this new policy governing the search for a new President of BCC fundamentally abrogates shared governance principles. In a letter that I wrote to the Board Chair shortly after the December 2006 Board of Trustees meeting, I asked the Board to reconsider this new policy, and I suggested that there be a meeting to discuss this. There has been no response to my request, unless you were to consider the Board's affirmation of their policy on January 3 to be a response. We believe that the opportunity to read resumes and send forth a few recommended names for interviews does *not* meet the consultative role that the faculty should play in such an important matter as the hiring of a new president for the college. The further opportunity to ask questions of finalists at proposed open forums, and then fill out forms, likewise provides inadequate participation in the decision-making process.

These are trying times for shared governance at colleges and universities in general. The ever-expanding proliferation of adjunct faculty and non-tenurable full-time faculty (called "Lecturers" at Bergen) encroaches upon opportunities for shared governance. The increasing corporatization of colleges is even more of a danger. At Bergen, right now, relations between the faculty and the Board of Trustees seem unfortunately to have become estranged; a commitment to healthy shared governance policies appears to have dissipated. This does not augur well for the long-term health of the college; it is obviously destructive of a governance system that Middle States has directed us to improve. Selecting the president of a college without providing a real voice to the faculty will be further detrimental to shared governance. Such a process will demonstrate neither a commitment to cooperation nor a belief in fundamental principles of collegiality. A new president can be someone who fosters the kind of dialogue that is needed at this College. A president selected with no input from the faculty, nor from students and support staff members, nor members of any of the college's other factions, will however be in no position to provide such vital leadership.

III: A Concluding Rationale

I write this article for the BCCFA newsletter in my capacity as Chairperson of the Faculty Senate. I do so because, although shared governance issues have historically been the responsibility of bodies such as our Faculty Senate, in this instance all of the faculty are affected and so we must speak with a single unified voice. Moreover, I completely agree with Stanley Aronowitz, who asserted in a recent article that in the current academic environment unions must insert themselves into governance systems. If this makes us guilty of the "overlap" that our recent Middle States report accused us of engaging in, then we plead guilty—appropriately, indeed insistently so.

INTERESTING READING

From the American Association of University Professor's "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities:"

*"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. The president should be equally qualified to serve *both* as the executive officer of the governing board *and as the chief academic officer of the institution and the faculty*. The president's *dual role* requires an ability to interpret to board and faculty *the educational views and concepts of institutional government of the other*. The president should have the confidence of the board and the faculty." [emphases added]*

Source: <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/governancestatement.htm>