

University of Maine System

Board of Trustees

Statement on Shared Governance

The University of Maine System is a public body created by charter and state statutes to carry out responsibilities on behalf of the citizens of Maine. Authority to carry out these responsibilities is vested in the Board of Trustees, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature. The following statement on Shared Governance expresses the System's commitment to fostering an atmosphere of trust, communication, and participation. The statement, however, is in no way intended to jeopardize, modify or minimize the authority of the Board of Trustees assigned by the State of Maine.

Shared governance relates to collaboration in specific areas where the mission of a University is strengthened by the joint participation of administrators and faculty members. Shared governance does not mean everything has to be done by joint efforts or by delegating decision making to faculty members; rather, it is an approach whereby the talents and collective intelligence of the university community are used to make effective and efficient decisions in specific areas.

The Board of Trustees affirms its support of governance systems and processes that are characterized by collaboration between the Board, the administration, faculty, students and staff in communication and decision making. Collaboration benefits the quality of education by:

Creating an atmosphere that fosters trust: Effective decision-making depends on accountability and the development of trust among the parties. This trust then provides the foundation for effective activities and efficient use of participants' time and reflects the collective knowledge of both faculty members and administrators.

Enhancing communication and participation: Effective communication is essential for successful shared governance. With respect to major decisions that could affect the educational process, such as budgeting, communication and program changes, input from all involved groups should be sought early in the process and final decisions should be communicated to all parties. Channels for communication should be widely known and participation encouraged.

Encouraging participation and efficiency: Those involved in shared governance need to be sufficiently informed to participate effectively. Efficiency in implementing decisions is the result of clearly defined roles and willing participation or understanding among those affected. Suitable resources and support must be made available for effective and efficient implementation of collaborative decisions.

Through governance bodies established at the university level, and through the roles of faculty and student representatives to the Board of Trustees, the University of Maine System Board of Trustees strives to strengthen communication and participation of faculty, students and staff.

At the university level, there are three major areas in which shared governance plays a role, as described below:

1. Academic policies.
2. Peer Review and Academic Administrative Selection processes
3. Budget and Strategic Planning

Faculty have a critical role in fundamental areas such as curriculum, instruction, research and student life. Faculty engagement in these areas is important to assure the competence and quality of university graduates.

Faculty participate in the selection and review of their peers, including recommendations for appointment, reappointment, promotion and tenure, in accordance with the boundaries of the collective bargaining agreement. Faculty also participate in the selection process for academic administrators.

In major decisions regarding the direction of the university, such as mission, strategic plans and budgets, it is desirable that input be sought from all involved groups early in the process and that final decisions be communicated to all parties. Channels for communication, consultation and information dissemination should be widely known and documented. Faculty participation in discussion of these topics should be encouraged.

Policy

Each university is expected to have in place a policy that clearly outlines how collaborative discussion of critical academic issues occurs at the university. This policy will be consistent with the guidelines in this document and in most cases will be embodied in the by-laws of the faculty governance body.

Approved by the UMS Board of Trustees on March 23, 2007.