

SHARED GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT

Faculty governance bodies and administrators at Northeastern agree that if we wish to improve the education we offer to students, it is essential that we find a way to make shared governance an effective force as decisions are made at the University.

We also agree that in order to make shared governance an effective force, we need to put into practice two fundamental principles: (1) We must engage in an ongoing collaborative dialogue as administrators and faculty governance bodies communicate with each other throughout the decision-making process. (2) That collaborative dialogue must occur in an atmosphere of "transparency"; i.e., the information that is used in making decisions must be clearly communicated to all concerned.

In order to implement those two fundamental principles, we need to adopt some specific practices. First, we need to revise the "flow chart" for shared governance that appears in the Faculty Handbook. In its current form, the flow chart indicates that information at Northeastern only needs to flow in one direction -- from faculty committees to administrators and/or to faculty councils, and then from the councils to the Senate and/or the various administrators. If we are to have "collaborative dialogue" and "transparency" in decision-making, then obviously information needs to flow in two directions: from the administration to the faculty governance bodies at various levels, and from the faculty governance bodies to the administration at various levels.

Second, we must do all we can to ensure that clear communication occurs at all levels. For instance, administrators at the various levels need to communicate proposed goals and objectives to the various faculty bodies so that faculty understand what the administrators propose to establish as priorities and why the administrators advocate the adoption of those priorities. In addition, both faculty bodies and administrators need to communicate their recommendations on particular issues to the appropriate parties and to provide rationales for those recommendations -- rationales that provide specific information that motivated the decisions in question.

Finally, we must honor the assessment principle of "the feedback loop." When administrators concur with the decisions made by faculty governance bodies, the administrators need to make that clear. On the other hand, when administrators do not concur with any decisions made by faculty governance bodies, the administrators need to communicate not only their decisions but also the rationales for those decisions. By doing so, the administrators can make it clear that they have indeed listened to the faculty, but after doing so, they have concluded that there are good reasons for embarking on different courses of action than those suggested by the faculty bodies.

If the above principles and practices become standard procedure at Northeastern, then shared governance will be able to function more effectively, permitting faculty and administrators to work together to improve the education we offer to students at Northeastern.

Approved by President Salme Steinberg and
the Faculty Senate, April 2002