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ABSTRACT

The goal of this ethnography-based study is to investigate informal communication processes in shared governance institutions. Shared governance is academia's version of the corporate world's total quality management philosophy and outlines a system where members at all levels of the institution have a voice in decision processes. The interviews conducted in this study reveal that many believe most decisions are made in informal meeting that occur at times other than in the formally convened and formally conducted business meetings. Based on data collected, a communication model of shared governance is formulated that draws attention to the interdependence of formal networks of committees with networks of individuals interacting with individuals in informal meetings. The communication model of shared governance has four levels: faculty responsibility, governance structures, communication processes, and meeting outcomes. The model provides a non-traditional view of faculty responsibilities by treating governance as an equal partner with the usual faculty duties of teaching, research, and service. (Contains a model, a table, and 28 references.) (NKA)

The Connection Between Formal and Informal Meetings:

Understanding Shared Governance in the Small College Environment

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Abstract

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The Connection Between Formal and Informal Meetings:

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The goal of this project is to provide a description of communication processes utilized in organizations that embrace a shared governance approach to decision making. This philosophy presents academic organizations with practices that foster collaboration among constituencies on such matters as curriculum, planning, promotion, tenure, and budgets. Since the mid-sixties, several models of shared governance have been designed that emphasize clearly defined and articulated structures involving faculty. Organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and external accrediting agencies have consistently called for clearly defined structures that show how faculty input is incorporated into decision making processes. These organizations, however, focus on the formal means of communicating that occur among the faculty, administration, and governing boards. They do not describe or require informal yet relevant communication activities where a great deal of organizational business can be accomplished. The interviews conducted in this study reveal that many believe most decisions are made in informal meetings that occur at times other than in the formally convened and formally conducted business meetings. Based on this claim, we have formulated a model of shared governance that provides a comprehensive picture of both formal and informal communication processes. The model draws attention to the reciprocal nature of networks of committees with the less defined and understood networks of individuals interacting informally with other individuals to accomplish goals of shared governance.

Faculty Involvement in Governance

Shared governance is academia's version of the corporate world's total quality management philosophy and outlines a system where members at all levels of the institution have a voice in decision processes. According to Blendinger, Cornelious, and McGrath (1998), shared governance systems evolved because more faculty were recognizing that deans and other administrators cannot solve all of the issues facing universities (p. 5). One of the earliest statements on shared governance was jointly formulated in 1966 by the AAUP, the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges who held that faculty should have primary authority over curriculum, research, and faculty status (AAUP, 1999). This statement has received wide acceptance in most accrediting organizations such as North Central Association that requires faculty to have a significant role in developing and evaluating the institution's educational programs and to be involved in governance through their work on committees and other institutional processes (NCA Handbook, 1997; NCA Overview, 1999).

As a framework used to establish policies and procedures, several models of shared governance have been formulated to illustrate how universities are, or should be organized to achieve their goals (Gollattscheck, 1985; Millett, 1962). The bureaucratic management philosophy, influenced by Weber's work, is based on concepts of hierarchical structure, formal communication, and authority systems and tends to line up decision-making responsibilities with job descriptions (Deegan, 1985). It reflects a system within which most decisions are made at the top of the administrative structure or at the top of subunits (Gollattscheck, 1985, p. 83). Information needed for decision-

making flows upward and the results of the decision process flows downward. Who participates in decision making is determined by administrators (Gollattscheck, 1985). In contrast, participatory management philosophies outline systems in which "decisions are made cooperatively by those with authority for making and implementing the decisions, and by those who will be affected by them" (Gollattscheck, 1985, 84). The collegial model, which emerged as a reaction to the bureaucratic model, involves the use of joint committees to enhance interaction and commitment to goals. It is a management philosophy based on the concept of a community of scholars and serves as the guide for academia's shared governance philosophy (Millett, 1962). The primary structures of this governance model consist of university groups (e.g., administrative advisory councils, personnel review boards, and faculty senates) that make up the network of committees involved in decision processes (Palmer, 1985). According to Wygal (1985), committees are the main tool used to promote participatory governance especially faculty senates that are designed to serve as the primary mechanism for faculty input on the development or modification of college rules affecting the instructional programs of the college (pp. 68-69).

Effectiveness of governance systems. Several studies have been conducted to track the creation of shared governance systems as well as assess their effectiveness. In their study, Biendinger et al., (1998) monitored the establishment of a shared governance system for the College of Education at Mississippi State University. In this college, the faculty advisory committee first functioned to advise the dean by responding to his requests before it began questioning whether its role should be reactionary or advisory. The committee began declining the dean's request who asked it to accomplish certain

university business (e.g., selecting recipients for university awards), and started becoming more proactive in setting its own agenda (Blendinger et al., 1998). Pope and Miller (1998) conducted a case study of a private, historically black college and university (HBCU) by surveying members of the university for agreement and disagreement to various governance issues such as faculty's role in governance processes. They found that while the faculty agreed strongly that their governing body represented their point of view, they disagreed that their governance body was well represented on committees making decision about the allocation of resources (Pope & Miller, 1998).

Others have suggested that a common problem affecting the success of shared governance is the way that systems have haphazardly evolved and are defined by the university. According to Guffey and Rampp, (1997), there often is "a lack of agreement as to just what shared governance entails" (p. 4). Mims and Newbill (1995) reported that in situations where shared governance is the method of record there frequently exists an undercurrent of confusion and strife between faculty and administration as to the role each should play in this kind of system. They stated this is an indication that a clear definition of shared governance and it processes have not been agreed upon. Allen and Glickman (1992) suggested that no implementation could proceed until the definition of the model is developed and accepted by all institutional constituencies. Another problem created by having undefined structures involves the process of reporting actions of one unit to another. According to Gollattscheck (1985), when decision-making conditions are vaguely described in university document such as charters of faculty senates, then lines of reporting, for instance, who is responsible for governance and to whom does one report--faculty senate or someone else, is less likely to be understood (p. 93). An additional

confusion is that shared governance s models usually describe a total and uniform structure (i.e., entirely bureaucratic or participatory system) that almost never exists. According to Gollattscheck (1985), few colleges are so bureaucratic that some decisions are not made in a collegial way, and it is rare to find a college so completely participatory in governance that some decisions are not made bureaucratically. As an accumulation of processes that develop over time, governance most often evolves in a somewhat haphazard fashion, without a deliberate plan or design, and is more likely to consist of processes reflecting a variety of governance models Gollattscheck (1985).

Another barrier that affects the success of shared governance systems involves the individuals who participate in them. A central issue when implementing shared governance is universities' long history of distrust and environments of "we versus they." Administrators may not believe faculty will follow through with decisions, and faculty may not trust administrators to take actions. Guffey and Rampp (1997) argued that the lack of trust severely limits the effectiveness of shared governance systems and that shared governance can not work "when groups see each other as adversaries" (p. 6). In addition, isolation that can lead to a lack of information may in turn produce distrust and non-commitment. Allen (1991) suggested that it is not uncommon for serious coordinating problems to arise within communications processes that keep faculty from being informed of decision outcomes are non-existent. Guffey and Rampp (1997) adds that faculty who do not have information must react after the fact instead of being able to be proactive (p. 9).

Background for the Communication Model

As previously stated, our goal for this research project is to provide a realistic description of communication processes employed by organizations that embrace a shared governance philosophy. It provides a starting point for university faculty and administrators to reevaluate the importance everyday talk plays in decision making. To accomplish this goal, we conducted an ethnography-based case study of a mid-size regional university that was involved in carrying out a re-structuring process largely influenced by requirements set by its external accrediting agency. (We refer to this university as SEU.) The case study included interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators, observations of naturally occurring interactions, and an analysis of diary entries recorded by members of SEU. We also conducted a textual analysis of documents prepared by SEU and it accrediting agency. The research progressed in a circular pattern as we moved back and forth between reviewing literature about shared governance systems, and analyzing the content of the interviews, observations, diary entries, and documents (See appendix A for a sample diary entry that was written by a participant.)

Formal Structures. In the textual analysis, we examined a self-study report produced by SEU and the response to it produced by consultants working for the accrediting agency. The university had been required by the agency to implement a governing process operating with clearly defined structures and procedures that provide for faculty involvement (Roweton & Williams, 1998). The university responded to this requirement by changing the appointment of faculty to standing committees and making administrative members non-voting members of curriculum, general education, and graduate committees (Self-study Report, 1998). One governing structure that it

established was the Annual Forum on Governance where faculty and administrators respond to the progress of campus committees. It instituted a structure that requires committees to report to the faculty senate rather than reporting to administration as they traditionally did in the past (Self-study Report, 1998). The Self-study Report also described processes for selecting members to committees by the Faculty Senate and for reporting actions taken by the committees. It explained how the faculty senate reports to the President and how the personnel, planning, university affairs, and budget committees report to the faculty senate. In the Evaluation Report, the consultants stated that the Self-study Report showed evidence that faculty participated on committees and in strategic planning. They also pointed out that faculty senate and administration should review the structures for redundancies and for opportunities for various committees to interact. Together the reports illustrate a distribution of formal communication structures that attempt to ensure faculty involvement.

Informal structures. Although the Self-study and Evaluation Reports define formal structures of the governing process at SEU, they did not recognize the informal activities that occur on a daily and unpredictable basis. While conducting the observations and interviews, we learned that a great deal of collaboration, idea sharing, and decision making happen constantly among members of the university in informal settings. During these moments of collaboration, university issues were incrementally dealt with in someone's office, in doorways, on the telephone, through electronic mail, in transit to formal meetings, in transit to classes, and so forth. One interviewee offered this statement about the importance and frequency of this kind of collaborating: "I am convinced that all real problems are solved in informal meetings. By the time formal

meetings take place, they are simply used to confirm what took place in informal gatherings."

This study on shared governance supports other researchers who suggest that a great deal of organizational business is conducted in informal meetings. For example, Stamps (1998), reporting on the work of a group of ethnographers researching a high technology company, argued that the vast majority of corporate knowledge is the information that is shared or created in face to face conversations among workers. In other research about the importance of informal meetings, Mangrum (1996) and Mangrum and Wieder, (1997) systematically described the features of informal meetings by showing who is involved in them, how they are assembled, and the types of issues that are discussed. Merrell (1979) defined temporary, intimate, work-oriented encounters between two or more people conferring to get something done as huddling. He pointed out that huddling goes on all around us and that people working in huddles usually accomplish the most significant work in organizations. Boden (1984) claimed that informal meetings are the most pervasive forms of social action in organizations and stressed that they are of paramount importance in the process of organizational decision making.

The following diary entries illustrate that instead of governance taking place within a formal network of committees, work talk does take place among individuals in informal situations.

> Entry 1: I talked with Sam Littleton and Bryon Smith in the office about the zero level science courses (Phsc 0124). The duration of the meeting was about 15

minutes. We discussed the 0124 syllabi and assessment after the course to determine effectiveness.

Entry 2: Robert and I had a conversation about our Program Review Panel. It was about a five-minute phone conversation. Robert had called and left a message that I return his call regarding the program review panel. The first of many outside reviewer reports had been returned. He asked if I wanted to receive copies of all the reports and if I wished to use the same reviewers to evaluate the resumes. I said that I did wish to do so. We talked about the time line for reviewing the consultants' reports. I mentioned that I will be out of town March 10-12, and suggested that the panel begin its work after spring break.

Entry 3: John walked into my office and asked about a table that he is inserting into a report. He interrupted my work to ask his questions. I stopped typing on my computer and together we worked out a plan for him. He was including a table that had too many details. He pulled a chair beside mine so we could both see the paper that he was holding. As he looked on, I took a scrape piece of paper and scribbled a new layout for his table. Together we came up with a way to chunk his data into fewer categories to make the layout look nicer. I didn't have an answer to his problem when he first approached me and neither did he. But as we talked we came up with a solution.

The kind of informal meetings such as the ones in entries 1-3 happens among people who have knowledge or expertise with the problem or task at hand. They may occur because the parties within a given location are working on a common problem. A relevant feature of this kind of collaborative meeting is that it is okay to interrupt the

other person's work possibly because the meeting is expected to be a brief encounter. Much of the time, informal meetings happen because someone is seeking assistance or advice from another as in the third diary entry where John interrupts his colleague's work to seek her advice on his project. In this meeting, the focus of their conversation is the paper that John is holding. It is in contrast to what would typically occur in a formal meeting where all participants might have a copy of the document in question. Because of the spontaneity of informal meetings, looking on and sharing are normal ways of interacting. Also typical in this interaction is the piecing together of information. In entry 3, John initiates the episode by asking for input, but as the conversation develops it moves to a kind of collaboration where the solution is generated by both participants, a sort of meeting of the minds with each adding ideas.

Embeddedness in formal structures. Another relevant feature of informal work gatherings is their relationship to the formal structures of the organization. Informal and formal meetings are a matter of reciprocal context, each potentially providing thematically relevant information for the other (Mangrum, Wieder. & Fairley, 1998). While some informal meetings can stand alone with no connection to formal meetings, most occur against a backdrop of meetings of many different kinds (e.g., assessment, planning, budget, program review meetings, etc.). Informal meetings may furnish the seed for ideas that are to be discussed and expanded later in formal meetings or they may be a response to issues raised in formal meetings. In fact, gathering information for the formal meeting is typically performed before or after a formal meeting not during it (Mangrum, Wieder. & Fairley, 1998). Entries 4 and 5 illustrate the reciprocal nature of

formal and informal meetings by showing that a common purpose of the informal ones is bringing committee members up to date on what took place in other meetings.

Entry 4: I talked about three minutes in the hallway by the elevators to Dean Mitchell and Ernest. Earlier that morning, I left Mitchell a voice mail about what our committee is doing and that we had another meeting scheduled. After I came down from the stairs, I ran into him. Before I could ask him about my voice mail, he said I got your message. I briefly explained that I was concerned that our group was taking too much time. He said it was fine because the other subcommittee was still working.

Entry 5: I talked with Jim about our serving on a team to rank order consultants for Program Review. Jim missed the formal program review meeting with the Vice-president, so I picked up the packet of information that he and I needed. I called him on the phone to make plans to get the packet to him. This phone call was fairly short about 2 or 3 minutes. Immediately after our phone call, a student worker came to get the packet. A few minutes later, Jim calls me back to talk about the packet of information. At the end of this second phone call, we agreed to review and rank order the resumes then get together and add our scores. Jim also told me that he had already spoke with Judy and with Robert about what took place in the program review meeting.

Many informal meetings occur as individuals organize committees, select members (see entry 6), and schedule meetings. They often occur at the beginning or end of formal meetings (see entry 7). They can even happen around conference tables during other meetings, for instance, in the scenario presented in entry 8, two members from this

committee are discussing issues from another committee while waiting for the current meeting to convene.

Entry 6: I received a call from the vice president of academic affairs asking if I would recommend a specific department member for service on a committee. I responded by saying that I needed to discuss the recommendation with the faculty member. When I next saw this faculty member I asked her if she would be willing to serve. She responded in the affirmative and I phone the VP.

Entry 7: When I went to the enrollment goal meeting, I was elected to chair a subcommittee. Vanessa and I stayed late to set a date for the subcommittee's next meeting.

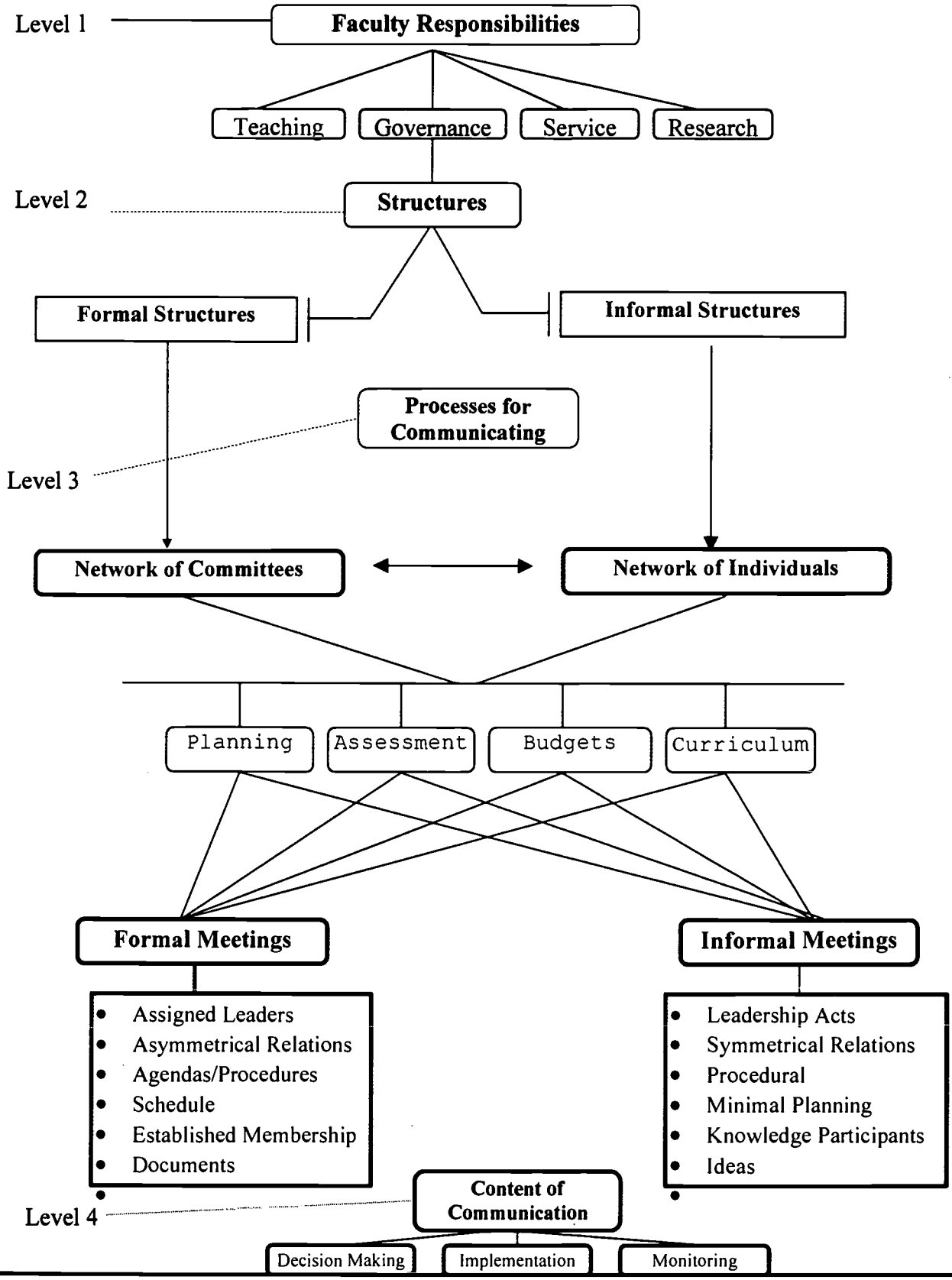
Entry 8: On November 17th, Terry and I met briefly to talk about our project from the program review committee during an IRAC meeting. I stood at the end of the table where she was sitting. We talked briefly like less than 1 minute about our job to select an external consultant for program review. Terry said we'll probably go with your candidate. I said we could add scores together.

Communication Model of Internal Shared Governance

To create a more comprehensive picture of shared governance, we formulated a model that describes communication processes occurring among faculty and others. The reason for undertaking this task is in response to concerns of other research that suggests governance systems haphazardly evolve without deliberate planning and that institutions leave communication processes subject to interpretation. A consideration that we add to previous studies is that traditional models of shared decision making overlook the reciprocal nature of formal and informal communication processes. While the textual

analysis of the reports indicate that formal governance structures are clearly defined at SEU, the analysis of the interviews and diary entries (presented in the previous section) supports that a relevant and ongoing feature of governance is the informal meetings conducted by members of the university as they go about doing university business. he model will draw attention to the need to encourage faculty and others to reevaluate the importance everyday talk plays in decision making and to utilize informal channels to support communication activities in the formal structures (see figure 1 for the model).

Communication Model of Internal Shared Governance



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Levels of the Model

Faculty responsibilities. This communication model of shared governance does not attempt to account for external structures involved with universities such as state governments, boards of regents, student governments, but focuses on the role of faculty. It first draws attention to the idea that governance is a responsibility co-existing among the traditional faculty responsibilities of teaching, service, and scholarship. This level addresses weaknesses identified in the evaluation report written by members of the accrediting agency who stressed that a balance among the different faculty responsibilities was needed at the university (Roweton & Williams, 1998). This level distinguishes governance responsibilities from service that can include many things such as sponsoring student organizations and serving on homecoming committees. Putting governance under service diminishes the role of faculty participation in policy decisions that determine the direction of the university. Furthermore, this model recognizes that faculty must juggle this responsibility with the others as a necessary part of effective shared governance systems. Mahon (1994) pointed out that participatory types of governance are time consuming and that these large time commitments place additional burdens on faculty, taking away from their historical roles as instructor and researcher.

Structures. The next level of the model indicates that governance systems consist of both formal and informal structures. Formal structures are components of the university (e. g., administrative offices, presidents, deans, faculty senates, advisory committees, students, operating rules, expectations, scheduled meetings, agendas, policies, assigned topics) that have been defined in written documents and agreed upon

by constituencies of the university. Clearly defined formal structures such as faculty senates and operating procedures are required by external accrediting agencies. In fact, the Self-Study Report written by SEU was a requirement by its accrediting agency to provide proof that it had structures in place that ensured faculty participation in governance. In contrast, informal structures such as the unplanned, unscheduled work gatherings described in the previous section are neither clearly defined orally nor written in documents, neither do external agencies require them as proof of participation. Paradoxically, while these structures are seldom defined or stated in organizational charts or job descriptions, members of the organization are aware that they exist and can talk about them. Possibly the reason that universities and accrediting agencies overlook the pervasiveness of informal communication activities is the strong influence of bureaucratic models that placed a great deal of importance on written and formal means of communicating. By adding informal structures to the model, we imply that they should be recognized, encouraged, and incorporated into governance systems.

Processes. The third level delineates who talks to whom about what topic in what kind of setting and how participants accomplish interactions. Processes utilized by formal structures involve a network of committees associated with administration, faculty senate, and other structures who work together to accomplish the goals of shared governance. These committees follow formal guidelines or procedures for administrative responsibilities, organization of academic departments, personnel policies, faculty development, evaluation policies and so forth. Often, these guidelines explain how committees are related in that they engage in tasks that affect the others and the decisions of one committee is monitored and/or implemented by another. For example, the

function of the General Education Committee (GEC) is to provide leadership in evaluating and developing the general education curriculum (Academic Policies and Procedures Manual, 1999). Any recommendation by the GEC must be submitted to the Academic Council and the GEC will work with the appropriate faculty committee and/or administrative office to ensure the continuation and assessment of the general education program.

Another definitive characteristic of formal structures is that the committees have established memberships. At SEU, the faculty senate or administration selects members for university committees, publishes a list identifying this membership, and distributes the list to each member of the university. Members serve on these committees for a designated length of time. Guidelines for establishing the membership to these committees is published in university handbooks such academic policies and procedures manuals. For instance, at SEU, the Policies and Procedures Manual outlines the university requirement that the Computer/Technology committee will be composed of seventeen members and that current members will elect a faculty chair each September (Academic Policies and Procedures Manual, 1999).

A typical activity performed by committees is distributing memorandums to announce the time and place that a committee will meet and what topics will be discussed in what order. The following paragraph typifies an announced meeting:

> The Faculty Senate will meet on Wednesday, May 5, at 2:00 p.m. in UC-215. All committees listed below should have a short summary report on their year's activities and recommendations and/or charges for the committee for the next academic year. The recommendations will be presented to the administration this

summer for their responses. After the administration and executive committee of the senate reaches a consensus on the recommendations and administrative responses, the results will be presented at the second annual Forum on Shared Governance which will be held in late August or early September.

The definitive hallmark of formal governance structures is a clearly defined meeting system where committee members interact in formal settings to deliver information, analyze problems, choose courses of action, make recommendations, approve recommendations, and implement decisions. These meetings are scheduled in advance, announced in writing, and structured around printed agendas. They have established membership, assigned leaders, and often begin with a head count of who is present and who is absent (Mangrum, 1996). Asymmetrical relationships typically exist among the designated chair and members of the committees in that the status of the participants affects the method for interacting (Linell & Luckman, 1991). A great deal of the talk performed in the formal meetings is the creation of written documents that provide an account of their actions, decisions, and plans. According to Boden (1984) formal meetings are scheduled gatherings in which the participants have some perceived role, some forewarning, a purpose, and knowledge of the time and place that they will occur, and they have a restricted turn-taking nature, channeled by and through a chairperson.

A less definitive feature of shared governance systems involves informal meetings. Although it has been commonly accepted that formality in university settings has distanced faculty from each other, we find the opposite to be true and that a great deal of collaborating among faculty and others does exist, particularly in mundane,

commonplace, gatherings where they discuss governance issues. Although members of the university typically do not have a name for these informal gatherings as they do for formal structures, they can elliptically refer to them. According to Mangrum and Wieder (1997), informal meetings are cultural things that organizational members could be said to really do and really mutually orient to. Likewise, Putnam & Stohl (1996) lend credence to the existence of informal meetings by suggesting that "communication with individuals outside the group becomes critical to decision making processes" (p. 174).

The communication model of shared governance also indicates that a relevant feature of informal meetings is the leadership actions that can be performed by any of the participants. While formal meetings have fixed leaders who typically control the flow of discussion and acknowledge who may be the next speaker, leadership in informal meetings is fluid and moves from person to person in a conversational turn-taking manner (Mangrum & Mangrum, 1999). It is not based on hierarchical positions, but is a function of such conversational accomplishments as initiating new topics, offering interpretations or clarifications, keeping the conversation from going astray, performing procedural talk, and closing the conversation. Relying on tape recordings of naturally occurring informal meetings at SEU, I assembled a list of leadership actions performed in informal meetings. See table 1 for a list of these conversational acts (cf. Mangrum & Mangrum, 1999).

Because informal meetings do not have formal guidelines such as agendas or parliamentary procedures for opening or closing a meeting, bringing topics of discussion to the floor or earning the right to an extended turn of talk must interactionally achieved with conversational devices. Unlike formal meetings, where participants are allowed

extended amounts of time to formulate uninterrupted turns or claims about the problem or solution, participants in informal meetings must incrementally formulate their claims about the problem with the collaboration of other participants involved in the meeting.

Outcomes of meetings. The link between formal and informal structures of governance systems is the university goals that are accomplished in them. Level four of the communication model shows that prominent outcomes common to both formal and

Table 1

Informal Leadership Actions

Assembles informal meetings	Initiates analysis of the problem
Initiates topics of discussion	Offers interpretations or clarification
Performs procedural talk	Seeks interpretations or clarification
Keeps the conversation from going astray	Integrates social talk into a meeting
Earns the right to extended turns	Integrates external messages into a meeting

informal meetings include making decisions, implementing them, and evaluating the effectiveness of the governance system. The outcome most commonly associated with governance is the process of making decisions concerning issues such as budgets, curriculum, program review, planning and assessment (Self-study Report, 1998). Requirements for achieving this outcome are outlined in documents published by organizations such as the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education that ask universities seeking accreditation to show "dependendable information to the institution's constituencies and involve them in decision-making processes" (NCA, 1999).

One committee member who assisted in writing the Self Study Report for SEU defined shared governance as "the process put in place to give everybody an opportunity to have a say in it before any decisions are made." This interviewee also stated that a relevant feature of shared governance is the feedback loops that, if there is disagreement, give everyone a chance to meet with committees to talk about decisions that affect them. The following quote reveals that the faculty member places priority on everyone having

representation and input into governance decisions that were traditionally the jurisdiction of administration:

> Before, if academic council didn't like a program, they could kill it. A request would go there and die there. There was no re-dress or recourse in decision making. Now we have opportunity to redress. If faculty want something they have input. If administration wants something changed they can not arbitrarily do it. Decisions such as changing curriculum or a course could be stopped any where along the line. Now there are feedback loops, that if it is stopped by someone such academic council, then we have a chance to meet with the committee to talk about it. We can now affect the decision making process.

Another outcome of formal and informal meetings encompasses the notion of moving beyond the decision making phase to implementing the decisions. Allen and Glickman (1992), stated that when one makes a decision and/or develops a policy there remains an obligation to see that the policy is properly implemented. Likewise, the communication model presented in this study implies that there should be a well defined strategy for including implementation steps in shared governance systems. Formal decision processes are usually planned for and described in university documents, but in terms of implementing decisions, unfortunately, this is not the case. In the Self-Study Report written by SEU, there is a flow chart explaining the steps of decision processes by listing inputs into the process such as faculty senate charges, faculty initiatives, and administrative requests, and the outputs such as administrative actions, faculty senate recommendations, and committee modifications. Of the ten levels of actions described in

the flow chart, only the last one addresses implementation and it simply states "implementation occurs exit process" (see appendix B).

The final outcome listed in level four of the communication model involves monitoring the effectiveness of the decision making and implementation processes. Again, interviews with members of SEU and other literature reveal a weakness at this level of shared governance. Formal documents prepared at SEU show that a system for monitoring progress and decisions made by committees, in a sense, does exist. For instance, reports from each are passed to other committees (the assessment committee provides reports to the Faculty Senate). What are not included in their documents, however, are methods for monitoring the effectiveness of the shared governance process. An interviewee provided this comment about his university's review process:

> We do not have structures in place to make sure we are running our governance system smoothly. This is a weakness in the system. We think its more of just a self-serving system. You go along and kind of hope that it works. You know this obviously could lead to great catastrophe in the future. I don't know of any formal assessment that is in place that does this. I guess we do have basically a policy in place and I guess there is any kind of assessment to make sure we are following the policy, but who makes sure we do it, I don't know.

Effective shared governance systems entails more than making the one "right" decision, it is involving all the right people, acquiring commitments of constituencies, looking at the right problems, and asking the right questions. A dean at SEU suggested that "assessing the system should be part of an ongoing planning process where you look at what worked, what did not work, and where do you go from there." According to

Gollattscheck (1985), all constituencies should be involved in constant monitoring in terms of where recommendations go, who handles them, and who is effective at it. Questions should be asked about whether or not members of the institution are satisfied with the existing system. The following quote provided by a chair of a department also provides insight into the kinds problems that can occur when a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the system has not been formulated:

> Our assessment to me is like when James Williams became known as the black hole. If you had to go through James' office to get something approved, forget it. Because the paper work would stop there and you would never hear back. And faculty across campus started talking "well where did ideas die." "Well I don't know, it went past the dean and got in James' office." "I don't know what happen to it then."

Discussion

This paper provides a description of the communication processes utilized in organizations that embrace shared governance for decision making. Administration and faculty have recognized the importance of using all available resources for problem solving within the existing formal structures of the organization. The AAUP and external accrediting agencies have a long history of recognizing that faculty input be utilized and have consistently called for clearly defined structures that show how faculty input is incorporated into the decision making process. The AAUP statement, in particular, focuses on the formal means of communication that occur among the faculty, administration, and governing boards. External accrediting agencies ask for proof that faculty members serve in advisory roles and as voting members of administrative and

faculty teams and committees. Most important is the requirement that the university be able to show that, whatever the channels of communication, they should be clearly understood and observed. The hallmark of this kind of accountability is the clearly defined meeting where discussions are held and reports and recommendations are generated. A university "flow chart" typically is available to show the progress of these reports and recommendations through the governance structure.

The nature and impact of informal gatherings appear to be just as important as the formal structures, but are not addressed by the AAUP nor by external accrediting agencies. Faculty collaboration is currently encouraged, but is thought of as faculty working together on academic programs or research than as a decision making tool. The faculty and administrators surveyed at SEU clearly place a great deal of importance on the informal meetings when asked. In the interviews, faculty were eager to admit that they felt many more decisions were made in informal meetings than were made in the formal ones. However, verification of that feeling may be difficult to prove because a formal tracking system of minutes and recommendations does not exist. Because this research used diaries, some hard evidence was collected and it did show that faculty were correct in their opinion that much of the hallway and sidewalk talk was carried into the formal meetings and that policies were adopted as a result of spontaneous discussions held before formal meetings took place. Obviously, if faculty perceptions are only partially true, further research needs to be devoted to informal meetings on campus. SEU, other colleges, accrediting agencies and the AAUP have vested interest in finding out the validity of the claims in this study. Faculty organizations (such as faculty senates) should be made aware of the importance such informal meetings hold and the impact they

have on faculty decision making. The model offered in this study provides a starting point for looking at informal meetings in the university setting and shows the importance of informal faculty meetings that occur on an everyday basis.

The communication model of shared governance has four levels: faculty responsibility, governance structures, communication processes, and meeting outcomes. The model provides a non-traditional view of faculty responsibilities by treating governance as an equal partner with the usual faculty duties of teaching, research and service. To couch governance under the auspices of service diminishes the importance of faculty input into the decision making process. Understanding the differences between formal and informal meetings and the importance of the ideas generated in the informal meetings and the influence they have on committee outcomes can only increase faculty confidence in their ability to influence decision making on their campus. Administrators who truly believe in shared governance can use the model to promote more meaningful collaboration among their faculty. Following the lead of some high technology companies, colleges may wish to encourage the informal gatherings by providing places for them to more easily occur. Moreover, research may need to be conducted with tape recordings and diary entries so that a rich field of material is available for analysis of the contributions made by faculty talking to faculty, staff and administrators in an informal setting.

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Appendix A

Diary Entry for IPS Meetings

Subject of Conversation: Program Review Panel

Participants:

1. Dr. Jack
2. Dr. Theresa
3.
4.
5.

Type of Meeting: (Phone Call) Face to Face Interaction E-mail

Place: (Office) Doorway Hallway Other_____

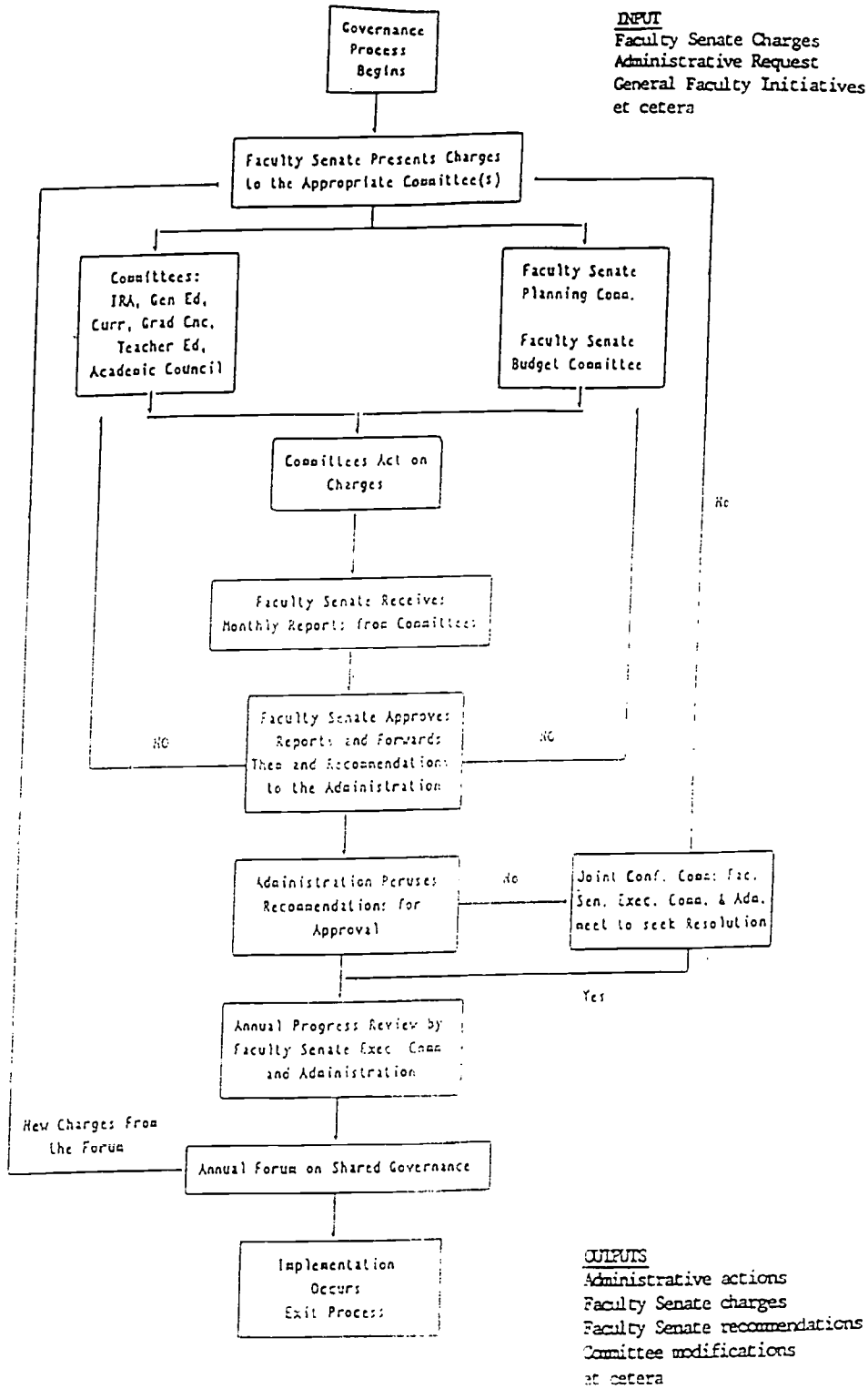
Time: 2/25/99 - 11:00

Duration: Five Minutes

Diary Entry: Jack called and left a message. He asked me to return the call regarding the program review panel. The first of many outside reviewer reports has been returned. He asked if I wanted to receive copies of all the reports and if I wanted to use the same pairs of reviewers used to evaluate the resumes. I said that I did wish to do so.

He talked about the time line for reviewing the consultants reports. I mentioned that I will be out of town March 10-12, and suggested that the panel begins its work after spring break.

Appendix B



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