Filled with What?
Leadership and Hope in the Faculty Senate

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ABSTRACT

The current study explored the theory of hope as a characteristic of individuals who engage in shared faculty governance, specifically addressing the question: What are the characteristics of faculty governance leaders, specifically their predispositions to have hopeful attitudes about their college campuses and administration? A survey was constructed around the Trait Hope Scale and administered to faculty governance units in 25 college campuses in the United States. A total of 325 respondents completed the survey. The majority of faculty members serving in representative senates had been involved for a moderate period of time (2-5 years), were faculty members in the liberal arts, an almost half intended to return to their faculty roles upon completion of their terms. All senators identified that they had high levels of Hope for the work they accomplish in their institutions.

Shared governance in higher education is at a critical point in history. Although there are surges in the collective activity of faculty members, their actions have continued to have little meaningful impact on college campus decision making. Events such as faculty protests of the new presidential appointment at Iowa, for example, yielded little change in trustee behavior. Similarly, it took the California Faculty Association nearly a year of negotiation and the threat of a system-wide strike before agreeing to a modest faculty pay raise agreement that was a fraction of the administrative salary increases over the same period of time.

There are at least three prominent perspectives as to why faculty are not able to gain the respect and prominence that many believe is a right and cornerstone of higher education. The first is that the ideal of shared governance has never actually been in full practice in the academy, and that depictions of it truly working have been exaggerated (Baldridge, 1982). The second is that the professionalism and technological advances inherent in the contemporary university restrict and limit what faculty and truly contribute to institutional operations (Miller & Smith, 2017). And the third, is that professional administrators fail to see the value of professorial ranks contributing to making difficult decisions on campus.

Part of the administrative perspective of faculty inability to contribute to decision-making is grounded in the thinking that the faculty members who are the least equipped to be successful are drawn to service activities, such as shared governance. Some of these arguments are based on the notion of a cycle of academic careers, where those in the final years of their professorial career give back

to campus through service late in their professional working life (Knefelkamp, 1990). Conversely, some argue that engagement in certain service organizations are a pathway to other administrative appointments or prominence on campus (Miller & Pope, 2003A). Yet others contend that faculty who are drawn to such service assignments are unsuccessful in their other roles, such as conducting research or teaching.

Individual characteristics may indeed be a key component in determining the effectiveness of an organization's potential, and shared governance bodies have at least some history of relating to human resource theory. Shared governance allows for greater faculty buy-in to decision making and ownership of determining outcomes (Evans, 1999). Additionally, such relationships among and between faculty members and administrators can build a more cohesive institutional environment that is well equipped to make complex decisions (Miller, 2003). Understanding how faculty-led shared governance bodies successfully operate is critical to their survival, and the current study was designed to explore the motivation and perspectives of faculty who lead these governance units. Specifically, the purpose for conducting the study was to describe the characteristics of faculty senate leaders, including the trait of hope among senate leaders.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Individuals pursuing academic careers undertake a comprehensive and lengthy process of education and training, typically consisting of advanced study and the completion of a significant research project. Such training has been noted to be deficient in terms of teaching preparation, commonly a significant portion of an academic faculty member's work assignment. The preparation of faculty members for academic assignments has also been noted for its lack of preparation of faculty for their service assignments, ranging from professional association involvement to how much service should be devoted to campus activities.

Service has generally been an overlooked and underappreciated component of the faculty member's work assignment, and the tendencies of service devotion are often attributed to mentoring and acculturation by department heads or senior faculty members (Guvendir, 2014; Tareef, 2013). Such a perspective varies based on institutional type, but does impact how a faculty member learns to devote time to different activities. Work in shared governance by faculty members can be similarly attributed.

Participation and service by faculty members has been linked to higher faculty morale, better attitudes about the workplace environment, more creative solution identification to problems, and a greater acceptance of problem solution and decision-making (Evans, 1999). These are general human resource theory driven concepts that have been linked to faculty governance activities, suggesting that faculty role identity is indeed "cognitive and emotive" (Fitzmaurice, 2013, p. 613). This means that self-esteem and a desire to perform well are critical components of the faculty member's life and professional world, and that involvement to service can be attributed many different variables.

Although there are few national studies that report the characteristics of who assumes leadership roles in faculty governance units, at least one identified an approximate even distribution of men and women in these leadership roles, the majority of leaders coming from disciplines in the liberal arts, and that over 60% of these leaders were tenured associate (28%) or full professors (36%) (Miller, 2003). Another study (Pope & Miller, 2005) situated in the community college context identified differences in how institutional leaders and faculty senate leaders viewed issues on campus, and that ultimately, "faculty senates are vehicles for faculty participation that provide important institutional learning and leadership-skill development opportunities" (p. 756). This finding was consistent with Trow's (1990) earlier argument that faculty governance provides leadership exposure and opportunities to learn about collaborative decision making, and that these experiences can serve as enablers to future leadership positions on campus.

Aside from possible future administrative ambitions, faculty members tend to see involvement in governance as a secondary role to other professional responsibilities (Williams, Gore, Broches, & Lostoski, 1987). In one of the few studies available profiling motivation for involvement, a study by the National Data Base on Faculty Involvement in Governance (Miller, 2003) surveyed 100 community college faculty senate leaders and identified the desire for empowerment, a sense of responsibility, and the importance of decision making as the top three motivations to get involved in faculty senate work. The same study identified attitudes toward students, a quest for knowledge, and self-interest as the least strong motivators for involvement.

The assumption of leadership roles by faculty members can be attributed to a number of variables, including feelings of responsibility, ownership of problems or situations, and even personal ambition. McDowell, Singell, and Stater (2011) studied department chairs as an example of entry into administrative leadership positions and noted that such activities can cause significant deterioration of research skills and knowledge, and that such positions, once entered, "can be an absorbing state" (p. 906). They suggested in this language that dealing with administrative and leadership problems and casting a vision over an organization can be addictive and change the focus of a faculty member from discipline specific and curiosity driven work to a service oriented perspective on higher education.

McDowell, Singell, and Stater (2011) also noted that the assumption of leadership roles can come with "substantial earning advantages" (p. 890). Aside from money as a motivator, the desire to be in charge or to assume power can influence a faculty member's interest in leadership positions (Czech & Forward, 2010), as well as mentoring leading to valuing the service and leadership roles of the faculty life (Tareef, 2012).

Although there is little scholarship on the motivation for involvement, there is a growing body of research on purpose in life or outlook as a variable that impacts quality of life (Leider, 2016). This means that those with purpose and an inclination to see opportunities have different perspectives on what to do, how to do it, and the value of different activities. This can be quantified as the positive psychology base trait theory of hope. Hope is a goal directed pathway that differs from optimism in that it is a trait that is learned and is an established part of an individual's character (Dieffenderfer, 2015).

Hope is part of the positive organizational scholarship movement that identifies psychological capital as critical to an individual's work and workplace success. When an individual has a high hope trait in the workplace, the individual is more likely to be collaborative, supportive, and contribute positively to the organization's success. The current study attempted to identify the hope trait among faculty members who have assumed faculty senate leadership positions, hypothesizing that those faculty members who decide to be involved do so because they have a high level of hope for organizational success.

The choice of hope as a variable for inclusion in the study was further validated by work that can be traced to Williams, Gore, Broches, and Lostoski (1987) who developed a six-perceptions of faculty governance model. In this mode, faculty members who decided to become involved were initially classified based on age, concern for governance issues, and confidence in the faculty member's governance role. These three classifications were then rated from high to low, resulting in six different faculty governance member categories (collegials, activists, acceptors, hierarchicals, copers, and disengaged). The research team provided no suggestion of distribution of faculty members across these categories, although the notion of hope for the professoriate as being involved in shared decision making or hope toward the institution are implicit in the discussion of collegials and activists in particular.

A different depiction of faculty governance members was proposed by Miller and Pope (2003B) who classified governance leaders as a rear guard defending the faculty, a politicians who are future campus leaders, those who are puppets of the central administration, rebels fighting the administration, technicians who make systems operate, and idealists who have some similarity with collegians. A strong identification of hope among faculty senate leaders would reinforce both the Williams, et al and Miller and Pope constructions of classifications of faculty senate leaders.

RESEARCH METHODS

The Trait Hope Scale, referred to as The Future Scale, was used to determine the level of hope faculty senators and faculty senate leaders had for their professional lives. The survey, comprised of the 12-point scale, also included four profiling questions, including a self-report of whether the respondent was a faculty senator or senate leader, the length of service on the senate, the respondent's academic discipline, and a question reflecting whether the individual had any interest in moving into an administrative position.

The survey was administered to 25 faculty senates in the summer of 2016. These faculty senates were purposefully identified by meeting the following criteria: willingness to distribute the survey to all senators and senate leaders, an established faculty senate that had been in operation for more than a decade, a comprehensive website that demonstrates that the senates were active (held meetings) in the past academic year, and all were four-year public institutions that were classified as comprehensive or had a research-orientation.

Each institution in the study was emailed a link to the survey, and an introductory email from the senate president (or equivalent titled individual) sent the link to the senators. A total of 325 completed, usable surveys were received from those self-identifying as 'senators' or members of the faculty governance unit (an average of 13 per institution with a range of 8-22) and 72 completed, usable surveys were received from those self-identifying as senate-leaders (title such as president, vice president, president-elect, past-president, etc.).

The estimated population for the faculty senate members, including leaders, was 980. The 397 combined usable responses therefore represented a 40.5% return rate, which was deemed usable for the exploratory nature of the study. As a limitation, the population estimate includes the population of each individual senate summed together; there are, however, multiple senate leaders who return to the senate following their terms as president, for example, and

as a result, the population of senate leaders was unknown, but would be at minimum, 25.

FINDINGS

As shown in Table 1, of the 325 respondents who identified themselves as elected senators, nearly half reported serving 2-5 years on the senate (n=138; 42%), with a near equal distribution of new senators (under two years, n=101; 31%) and over five years (n=86; 26.4%). The distribution for senate leaders was substantially different, with over 80% having served more than five years (n=59; 81.9%), suggesting that there is a process of senators learning the protocol and behavior of the senate prior to being elected into these leadership positions. Yet, nearly 10% of the leaders had served less than two years, and might be a reflection of new faculty moving to an institution and being seen immediately as a leader, or conversely, a faculty senate that has trouble finding someone to assume a leadership position.

Also shown in Table 1 was the distribution of academic disciplines represented on the senate. Nearly half of all senators and senate leaders (combined in the table) held academic appointments in the humanities or liberal arts (n=188; 47.3%), with one-quarter of those elected from disciplines in education or the social sciences (n=99; 24.9%).

Under half of the faculty senators surveyed clearly intended to return to their faculty roles upon completion of their terms in the senate (44.6%), and nearly one-fifth (18.1%) indicated that they would consider moving into an administrative position on a full-time basis. The responses for senate leaders were somewhat similar, with 34.7% of responding senate leaders intending to remain as full-time faculty members following the completion of their senate terms and 15.6% clearly indicating that they would consider a full-time administrative position.

The last section of the survey included the Trait Hope Scale. The 12-item section of the survey included items referred to as The Future Scale, and reflect an individual's outlook on the future, e.g., the person's sense of hopefulness. The survey had a hypothetical range score of 8 (low) to 64 (high). The current administration resulted in a range for the entire group of respondents as 32 for a low to 64. For senators, the range was 41-64 and for senate leaders, the range was 32-58. The overall group mean was 54.6 with a mean of 57 for senators and 50.3 for senate leaders was 43.76.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study suggested that faculty who are involved in faculty senate, generally, are hopeful about their involvement in faculty leadership activities and the system of shared governance. A culture for thoughtful problem solving and inclusion may exist in many of the faculty senates included in the study. This includes the encouragement of professional transition to and from the faculty senate, either returning to a role as professor or succeeding to a leadership role in college and university administration may also be a part of the culture. The results of the study support the notion that hope as a trait reinforces the emotive component of motivation to hold a service role in faculty governance groups. Where hope as a trait is recognizable among respondents, it may not be as apparent in those faculty senators' and leaders' home colleges and academic departments.

Service situates faculty members to have clearer pathways to pursue professional administrative roles, but does much less for individuals who are seeking to earn tenure at their institution or similar institutions. Unlike developing a research agenda or preparing for classes for the academic year, service and the opportunity to become involved in the shared governance process is not as incremental. Faculty can volunteer to serve on committees, organize research talks for students and faculty, serve in their respective professional association, and depending on rank, lobby for administrative positions even with only having a small amount of managerial or leadership experience. The process for publishing and teaching is less straightforward. Faculty, at times, have to advocate to a certain class, or may be pressured to teach classes that do not align with their expertise. Also, depending on the academic discipline, the rigor of publishing can vary. Participating in the publication process can be a year-long process, or more. These examples are noticeably different from the opportunity to serve in more streamlined or contrariwise, cumbersome governance systems.

Developing inter-institutional policies that enable productivity and a shared effort to protect pre-tenured faculty, and faculty who are in the middle of the tenure process, is critical for the efficient and more effective faculty governance structures. The culture for support of this type of approach including to prepare faculty for leadership, in many instances, will depend on senior faculty members taking the time to encourage involvement but dissuade, and even prevent, an overload of service-oriented tasks. Developing policies that prevent junior and mid-tenure track faculty from taking on more assignments or responsibilities than reasonably manageable is important for the success of the professional, but also is a mechanism for establishing or continuing a culture of hope.

Table 1
Participant Identifying Information

Characteristic	n	%
Role in the Senate		
Senator	325	81.8%
Senate Leader	72	18.1
Other	0	--
Length of Senate Service		
Senators (n=325)		
Under 2 years	101	31.0
2-5 years	138	42.4
More than 5 years	86	26.4
Senate Leaders (n=72)		
Under 2 years	7	9.7
2-5 years	6	8.3
More than 5 years	59	81.9
My Academic Discipline (all respondents)		
Architecture	16	4.9
Humanities/Liberal arts	188	47.3
Education/Social Sciences	99	24.9
Health sciences/allied health/medicine	31	7.8
Business	26	6.5
Engineering	17	4.2
Science	9	2.2
Law	4	1.0
Other	0	--
Future post-Senate Plans		
Senators		
Consider full-time administration	59	18.1
Remain full-time faculty	145	44.6
Not certains	121	37.2
Senate Leaders		
Consider full-time administration	11	15.2
Remain full-time faculty	25	34.7
Not certain	36	50.0
Hope		
Average	52	
Midpoint	48	
Range	32-64	

Faculty who participated in the study and demonstrated moderate to high levels of hope related to faculty governance, could be influential in diffusing the multiple ways that skeptical or uninvolved faculty perceive participation in service activities including faculty senates, and other similar bodies. Indicatively, hope is motivation for success and progression; one being an attainment and the other a process that typically most professionals strive to experience.

Creating cultural norms around hope creates an environment for positive work experiences, problem solving, and anticipation for success in a faculty member's professional career. Hope as a mechanism could be used for support and influence of faculty less engaged in decision making

processes, and could benefit the faculty member in their own professional efforts, especially as it relates to negative experiences that may come along with academic politics, bureaucracy, and other challenges. A space for further research to determine whether emotive traits can translate into positive experiences for faculty continues to exist.

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