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### **On the Cutting Edge: Rethinking governance in inter-institutional cooperation arrangements in higher education**

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#### **Introduction**

This paper will address governance in inter-institutional cooperative arrangements in higher education. Although such arrangements exist internationally and in a variety of forms, emphasis will be on Canadian and American arrangements with specific attention to consortia. After a brief review of the forms of arrangements and governance in higher education in general, governance in cooperative structures will be addressed and critically analyzed using case examples. Benefits and challenges cited in inter-institutional cooperative arrangements will become the foundation for a proposed model of governance. In addition, future directions will be highlighted.

#### **Thesis**

Traditional governance assumptions and principles of administration do not necessarily suit various forms of inter-institutional cooperative arrangements, particularly, consortia. Instead, one must rethink governance structures and processes. An ideal model of governance is guided by principles of mutual respect and commitment by all members and overcomes some of the current challenges known to these cooperative arrangements.

#### **Forms of Inter-institutional Cooperative Arrangements**

Although cooperation among higher education institutions (including institutes, colleges, and universities) continues to gain popularity and has become highly encouraged, terms such as "merger", "consortium", "affiliation" and "federation" are often imprecise and used interchangeably without clear understanding (Lang, 2002). In fact, the motivations for such combinations can be quite variable. The literature suggests that more often than not, cooperation in higher education is financially motivated. For example, as a means to increase efficiency, yet, decrease costs (Lang, 2002; Nicklin, 1994; Van Soeren et. al., 2000). Objectives for cooperation differ in smaller and larger institutions as well as for government. For instance, in smaller institutions, new revenue may be generated from new programs or the need to secure net new resources for their current programs and services. On the other hand, larger institutions may want to benefit from government incentives as well as filling a void of programs and services at a lower cost. Lastly, governments may opt for new programs at a relatively low marginal cost instead of

at average costs, as in the case of a merger (Eastman and Lang, 2001; Lang, 2002). Educational objectives also motivate higher education institutions to cooperate. This is specifically the case in consortia and in situations when the goal is to increase quality in specialized programs, as in the case of the Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Programme to be discussed in the case example (Konrad & Small, 1986; Van Soeren et al., 2000). Finally, a major motivator that combines the financial and educational objectives for inter-institutional cooperative arrangements involves internet technologies/distance education modalities. Here, telecommunication and information technologies pave the way for the sharing of intellectual resources at high levels of educational quality (Godbey & Richter, 1999). Of course, motivations also vary according to the form of inter-institutional cooperative arrangements.

A true merger suggests that two or more separate institutions become a single new organizational entity, hence, resulting in at least one of the institutions ceasing to exist as a legal entity. However, mergers can take more than one form and tend to be irreversible, yet, not all mergers are necessarily alike. For simplification purposes, mergers can be classified in terms of the relationships that they form between the activities they bring together such as a "horizontal merger", involving higher education institutions in the same field which provide similar offerings/programs, or a vertical merger where institutions are in the same field but provide different offerings. (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Lang, 2002).

Consortia are complex and defined by many characteristics. Unlike other forms of inter-institutional cooperative arrangements, consortia are institutions (i.e., different universities or colleges) that exist apart but can serve a variety of purposes. As such, they tend to be separately incorporated, have assets and liabilities, bylaws, and their own board of directors (which are usually appointed by the constituent membership of the consortia). Other features include the provision of integrated programs and services, and/or multi-academic programs (usually solely to its members); a permanent staff, fiscal autonomy; corporate identity; and most critical, voluntary membership. (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Keim, 1999; Konrad & Small, 1986; Lang, 2002). According to Baus & Ramsbottom (1999), academic consortia are formed for one main reason: to serve their member institutions. However, in recent years, there have been greater financial incentives to universities and/or colleges to form consortia, particularly in Ontario. Currently, in the U.S. there are approximately 125 consortia that vary in size. Programs most popular in consortia include cross-registration; library cooperation; IT/distance education; faculty development; and cooperative purchasing. However, each consortium has its own specific emphasis and there are literally hundreds of different programs and structures such as homogeneous and heterogeneous institutions serving a specific purpose or homogeneous and heterogeneous institutions serving a general purpose (Konrad & Small, 1986). As will be noted through the case examples and discussion of challenges, consortia do not appear to

form and survive easily (Baus & Ramsbottom, 1999). Although it is important to distinguish and describe the many forms of inter-institutional arrangements in higher education, this paper will mainly focus on consortia.

On the other hand, affiliations differ from consortia because the former typically involve only two institutions. Here, it functions as a division of specialized labour among two institutions to deliver a particular service or program and where partners do not offer overlapping programs (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Lang, 2002). To this end, affiliations tend to be found in the public higher education system (i.e., those that strictly control the right to grant degrees) and in the health care system (i.e., health sciences centres where hospitals may be affiliated with health science faculties in order to provide clinical instruction and conduct research). In short, an affiliation is regarded as a financial arrangement within a merger.

Of these forms of inter-institutional arrangements, federation has the longest history; as in the case of the English universities at Oxford and Cambridge. Again, there are key characteristics that define a federation including institutional autonomy (including each participating institutions' authority to make academic appointments and offer employment); variable size and diversity of their constituent membership (Lang, 2002). Federations are also organizationally and managerially complex and member institutions can continue to provide services and programs outside the federation (Eastman & Lang, 2001).

### **Overview of Governance in Higher Education**

The term "governance" typically refers to the formal structures and processes of decision making in organizations. In higher education, the concept of governance may be variable in terms of its representation of constituencies and institutional mandate. Most importantly, since higher education institutions have, to some degree, a relationship to the government, (therefore, subjected to the laws and decrees) the degree of dependence to the government affects the decision making processes and structures of higher education institutions. In this way, there is a strong relationship between external status and internal governance (Mitter, 1992). In Ontario community colleges (CAATS), governance poses many challenges because of its lack of bicameralism and close relationship to the government (i.e., as "extensions" of government departments). In most provinces, as crown corporations, community colleges are subject to provincial regulation, yet, have local/community boards with vague and varying degrees of authority (Jones, 1997; Skolnik, 1991). For instance, in practical terms, boards may exercise fiduciary control, establish policy, propose by-laws, and approve curriculum. Of importance to note, employees do not maintain statutory power at the decision-making level. (Dennison, 1994).

Moreover, CAATS' board of governors are responsible to the

MTCU through the College Compensation and Appointments Council (formerly known as the Council of Regents). The Ontario College Compensation and Appointments Council has three mandated roles including the appointment of governors to the 24 college boards; providing strategic advice to the MTCU; and acts as the agent for the employers in negotiating collective agreements with colleges' academic and support staff. In recent years, there have been a multitude concerns about the authority of boards and the level of faculty and student participation in governance within community colleges. In the case of the latter, the degree of participation appears to be lacking whereas in the former, boards have requested greater degree of authority for program delivery and human resource management (Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario, 1999).

In contrast, for the most part, Ontario universities have adopted a bicameral form of governance where the corporate charter delegates authority to two (governing board and academic senate) legislative bodies. The composition of boards include lay members, faculty, students, and alumni with members being appointed by either the provincial government, the board itself, the academic senate or another organization (i.e., alumni), or through the election by a constituency (Jones & Skolnik, 1997). In general, the role of governing boards is to make decisions that are in the best interests of the university as a whole. Actual structure and terms of reference (i.e., length of term, quorum) vary within university acts and by-laws. Interestingly, while boards possess great fiduciary responsibility, many have criticized the boards' lack of knowledge in understanding budgets. Over the past decade, accountability has been an issue challenging the university system. For instance, in Ontario, a Task Force was established in 1993 (to advise the provincial government) to recommend that governing boards be given the major responsibility for ensuring public accountability (Jones & Skolnik, 1997). At the same time, there has been some concern, particularly from Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), over the "blurred" role between the board and the senate. As a result, CAUT believes this is moving the universities closer to a corporate management model with a top-down governance structure (CAUT, 2001). Finally, the importance board self-evaluation is now being acknowledged by board members themselves (Jones & Skolnik, 1997). The recent trends and challenges are important to recognize since these, too, impact on inter-institutional cooperative arrangements. Most importantly, given that governance can be distinctly different in community colleges than from universities, cooperatives face a great challenge.

There are also several differences between boards in Canada and the United States. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that the American higher education system is quite distinct from that of Canada's, particularly in terms of diversity (including the number of private institutions). Having said that, multi-campus boards dominate the public university sector in the U.S. but not in Canada; there are

more faculty and student representation in Canada than in the U.S.; and a large majority of board members in U.S. public universities are appointed by the government (Jones & Skolnik, 1997). However, autonomous universities may elect their own board members and executives. Under trustee authority, where trustees are public lay members of governing bodies, trustees are ultimately responsible for the fate of the institutions and consequently, become the "legal owners" or "established legal managers" (Clark, 1983). On the other hand, the influence of trustees has varied widely across U.S. institutions where administrative authority and faculty have a varying degree of control.

### **Governance in Inter-institutional Cooperative Arrangements**

In an attempt to move toward facing the challenge of governance within inter-institutional cooperative arrangements, senate leaders are coming together. For example, in the U.S., leaders have formed their own consortium known as Association for Consortium Leadership (ACL) to serve as a reference centre for advice and information about all aspects pertaining to inter-institutional cooperatives among American colleges and universities as means to promote partnerships in higher education. Similarly there have been some attempts in Canada both at the national as well as international levels. Whether starting or sustaining an inter-institutional cooperation, governance is a formidable challenge, particularly for consortia and federations.

### **Structure in Consortia**

In the case of consortia in both Canada and the U.S., where membership is essentially voluntary, building strong communications and accountability processes that facilitate effective decision making is critical; to this end, institutional goodwill, trust and vision are necessary (Baus & Ramsbottom, 1999; Johnson, 1988). Since consortia are formal organizations that exist apart from the institutions that constitute their membership, members of the boards of directors of consortia are appointed by the constituent membership of the consortia (Keim, 1999; Konrad & Small, 1986; Lang, 2002; Watts, 1991). Having said that, a consortium could also consider some representation from the "outside" business, industry, or the community (Johnson, 1988). However, the level of representation (for example, as a full "voting" member) would need to be carefully considered. Typically, these members of the board are senior administrative officers (i.e., university presidents or delegate) or academic leaders (i.e., deans or directors of programs or services).

Usually, a full-time "officer" (i.e., executive director or coordinator) who is appointed by, and reports to the board, operationally manages the consortium; this officer is commonly an employee of the consortium and not necessarily part of the board or of the member institutions (Konrad & Small, 1986; Lang 2002). In this way, he or she can remain objective while being able to facilitate

decision-making as well as keeping competition or "turf wars" by members to a minimum. It should be noted that, although this appears to be the basic governance model, some variations exist. As previously noted, other staff (i.e., assistant) may also be hired to work along side with the officer and act operationally on behalf of the board. In an effort to increase visibility and participation, there are also consortia that appoint assistant directors or other officers to serve as consortium representatives from each campus or institution. Here, these representatives would likely be employed by each member institution. Needless to say, the role of the officer/executive director (or coordinator) is pivotal and requires strong leadership. Experience in administration in academic settings along with consistent objectivity is critical. Furthermore, given that the simplest decision is subject to the maximum possible scrutiny by numerous institutional agents, the executive director must expedite decision making processes (Horgan, 1999; Johnson, 1988).

### **Decision Making in Consortia**

Depending on the board's terms of reference or by-laws, decisions are accomplished either through member consensus or a majority vote; the latter is most common and easiest (not to mention, less time consuming). In voting, the structure and composition of the board is important as by-laws would need to determine quorum to vote or make decisions as well as determine the number of votes per member. Clearly, there are variations, yet in the true spirit of cooperation and equity, equal number of votes per member institution is ideal. However, according to Baus (1999), the basis for consortium activity is consensus formation. Baus contends that consensus is reached as an expression of institutional will. In order to this, clear communication/dialogue, trust, and adequate information are necessary. No doubt, even in this author's experience, consensus also requires much patience, time and respect for others' differing opinions. Consensus is based on cooperation among the group members; the decision is supposed to respond to the interests of everyone in the group. By the same token, it does not mean that everyone should be completely happy with the decision, but, that group members are willing to implement it (Shearouse, 1993). Not only does consensus in general take time, given the consortium members' individual or institutional interests, consensus can be a daunting task for boards. Baus & Ramsbottom (1999) purport that, "to say that consortia are about consensus building is to understate the vulnerability of every decision to factors too numerous to estimate" (p.13). Furthermore, adequate information is necessary for both voting and consensus decision-making processes. Again, as the "operational arm" to the board and in an effort to maximize time efficiency, the executive director most often has to strike a balance between "too much" information to the board versus "not enough" (Horgan, 1999; Larrance, 1999). Of course, this does not appear to be a unique situation for governance in consortia as many boards outside the realm of inter-institutional cooperative arrangements are typically challenged by this as well. To this end, it

becomes clear that decision structures/processes need to balance the capacity to act with decisiveness and the capacity to sustain a decision process through long paths to a successful outcome (Baus & Ramsbottom, 1999).

Using the following case examples, questions such as "how is governance structured when members are not heterogeneous (i.e., if there both universities and colleges are members)?" and "what are some of the challenges and benefits?" will be explored and analyzed. As a result, it will form the basis for a proposed governance model/structure.

### **Case Examples**

#### **Case 1: Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Programme**

In 1995, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOHLTC) funded primary health care nurse practitioner education. Given that the government was supportive of the nurse practitioner movement to meet its market and health care needs, it was the provincial Ministry of Health and not the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that proposed to fund the program for primary health care nurse practitioners. Under the auspices of the Council of Ontario University Programs in Nursing (COUPN), a ten university consortium, Ontario Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Programme (PHCNP programme), was developed and continues to be delivered and funded by the MOHLTC. Although consortia for nursing is not new nationally and internationally, this consortium is unique in its geographical scope; that is, its members span many hundreds of kilometers apart from as far as Lakehead University in Thunder Bay to the southern region of the province, including universities such as the University of Toronto and the University of Windsor .

The aim of adopting the consortium model was to increase cohesion, access, economy of effort, and standardization of primary health care nurse practitioner education (Van Soeren et al., 2000). Its large membership and successful aims has enabled the programme to become the only focused venue of primary health care education to nurses in Ontario. While its governance structure follows along the characteristics aforementioned in consortia, there are notable differences. The consortium is divided into three regions and a French programme. Each region and the French programme have a coordinator and a lead university. In concert with the consortium policies, the regional coordinators manage the program on a provincial level and make recommendations on developmental, implementation, and operational issues. Individual universities manage their own NP students, faculty and clinical advisors. In essence, COUPN is made up of nursing deans and/or directors of each university member, who serve as the board of directors, while the four (as opposed to one) regional coordinators act as the operational managers. However, the regional coordinators are not

employed by the consortium itself, rather, from the lead university from each of the regions. The deans and directors (the board) are accountable to their respective universities as well as principles of the consortium. The chair of the board (a dean or director/member) is rotated on an annual basis and is responsible for signing authority, public relations, and facilitation of meetings. Decision making at the board level is primarily by vote where each member carries one vote, however, coordinators are not voting members. Lastly, in order to ensure standardization of curriculum and to assist the board in policy decision making, a sub-committee known as the COUPN Curriculum Advisory Committee (CCAC), comprised of one representative from each member university, was formed. This committee has the authority from the board to advise on policy decisions related to curricular matters.

A few challenges have been identified within this consortium including communication among the coordinators, board members themselves, faculty and staff; prolonged decision-making processes; and sustaining institutional autonomy (Van Soeren et al., 2000). For instance, because the curriculum is exactly the same and delivered to all ten universities, any changes or revisions to any of the courses must be approved by the CCAC. As a result, each university is 'forced' to accept the curriculum regardless. As for decision making, these are formally made at meetings (two per year) so that in some instances, recommendations requiring approval or decisions may need to wait until meetings occur. There have been situations where 'urgent' decisions or approvals are required by the board; in this case, teleconferences are held but with little success as most board members require advanced warning to teleconference.

Of note, this author questions whether the PHCNP Programme is, in fact, a consortium. By definition, it has some characteristics of a federation such as its sustained institutional autonomy and human resource management residing in each participating institution. Furthermore, because the coordinators are not "independent" (i.e., not hired by the consortia itself), perhaps then, this case example could be viewed as more of a "hybrid" between a consortium and a federation.

Fortunately, this case example involves homogenous membership; that is, all members are universities. However, given the politics of nursing regarding credentialing where a baccalaureate degree is necessary for entry to practice for registered nurses (in particular, Ontario), collaboration between colleges and universities is now a reality. As a result, most member universities in this case example currently have community colleges as "partners". While this does not pose a challenge for the PHCNP Programme at this time (given that it is a separate program not considered at the basic nursing level of education), it begs the question of how the consortium would be structured if members were heterogeneous. As cited by the nursing collaboration programs in Ontario via the Report of the Nursing Education Implementation Committee (1999), many

challenges continue to be addressed including lack of agreement on appropriate governance structure; academic issues (i.e., standardization of admission requirements and faculty credentials); administrative issues (i.e., differences in tuition fees, human resources, funding formulas; and institutional policies and procedures). Interestingly, some of these challenges also "plague" the PHCNP programme including the different fee structure and policies within each member university. Clearly, these challenges require a rethinking of governance that is best addressed in consortia consisting of heterogeneous members (colleges and universities).

### **Case 2: The Greater Cincinnati Consortium of Colleges and Universities**

Next, in a U.S. case example, heterogeneity appears to be tackled. The Greater Cincinnati Consortium of Colleges and Universities (GCCCU) was formed in 1974 to promote cooperation and collaboration among its member colleges and universities in the Greater Cincinnati area. Its mission "is to promote a continuing awareness of the diversity, contributions, intrinsic value and needs of quality higher education in the Greater Cincinnati area. Through association and collaboration, the members, representing diverse institutions, strive to enhance the vitality of higher education and strengthen each individual institution, its faculty, its administration, and its student body." (GCCCU, 1991). Heterogeneity is evident as GCCCU includes three state universities, one religiously affiliated university, a public technical and community college, several liberal arts colleges, and a variety of specialized private institutions. The successful cooperation of such a diverse group of institutions has been sustained and supported because of the ongoing commitment from everyone involved in the consortium. GCCCU is governed by the presidents of the fourteen institutions who form the board of trustees. The consortium also employs an executive director and a part time coordinator. This structure follows the previously defined concept of consortia quite well. In addition, the consortium consists of many sub committees (each with a chair) to deal with ongoing policy and operational issues including chief academic officers; continuing education directors; disability services; graduate program directors; health education and promotion; human resources/personnel directors; international programs directors; roundtable steering committee; and chief student affairs officers. Decision-making processes are initiated by the sub-committees and often recommended to the board. At the board level, decisions are made through majority vote (J. Piccirillo, personal communication, April 10, 2003).

### **Benefits and Challenges**

#### **Benefits**

Regardless of the motivations to initiate inter-institutional cooperative arrangements, benefits are also met with many

challenges. From the case examples addressed in this paper, benefits include increased cohesion, access, and standardization of curriculum within a high quality program are just a few benefits. As previously mentioned, cost is the primary motivator for forming the array of arrangements. In cases where cooperative arrangements involve both small and large institutions, financial gains could be acquired for all sized institutions. Other financial gains include a sharing of overhead costs and reduced administrative costs (Keim, 1999; Larrance, 1999). Other than financial benefits, cooperative arrangements allow shared resources and expertise; enhanced quality and breadth of program/services offerings; greater access to programs and services; opportunities to build skills around cooperation; increased dialogue among colleagues in a network of different institutions; greater diffusion of best practices; and mobilization for effective planning and control in higher education (Konrad & Small, 1986; Keim, 1999; Van Soeren et al., 2000).

As access is undoubtedly an important goal for all institutions of higher education, consortium arrangements can significantly increase access to services and programs to many of its member institutions. Reflecting back to the case example of the PHCNP programme, it is through the consortium arrangement, that Lakehead University can open its doors to the RNs in its geographical area so that they, too, can become Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioners. In fact, these nurse practitioners are definitely needed in such an under-served area. In this way, access to the PHCNP programme at Lakehead University can respond to the goal of access to the university itself as well as the health care system. At the same time, it serves as a "role model" to other universities interested in some form of cooperation.

### Challenges

Again, as illustrated from the case examples, challenges include communication; prolonged and/or "ineffective" decision making processes; and respecting institutional autonomy (Van Soeren et al., 2000). Other challenges include lack of cohesion due to potential lack of trust and commitment as well as competition among members; unarticulated roles and expectations; unclear mission, structure and philosophy; insufficient literature on best practices for these types of arrangements; poor visibility in each member institutions; and lack of participation from various groups of people (Baus & Ramsbottom, 1999; Johnson 1988; Keim, 1999; Konrad & Small, 1986; Lang, 2002).

Lack of trust is a critical issue in several forms of inter-institutional cooperative arrangements. While this may have an impact on cohesion and level of commitment, it is a fundamental challenge that requires resolution in order for consortia to survive. Most often, lack of trust is "side effect" of institutional autonomy and territorialism or competition. In fact, Johnson (1988) argues that "autonomy is a term that consortium directors hear frequently in connection with the failure of cooperative ventures to gain support" (p.194). In addition, in

such political environment, it is not unusual for people to be suspicious at certain times, and as a result, protect their territory regardless of their motivations for joining consortia (Gray, 1996; Konrad & Small, 1986). According to Johnson (1988), trust can be resolved by members getting to know one another both professionally and personally. Trust can also be accomplished and competition diminished by focusing on the agreed upon mission and goals of the consortia (Gray, 1996). Of course, the executive director of the consortium can also help facilitate these resolutions. Once accomplished, institutional autonomy can be balanced. Here, trust, commitment, competition, and autonomy all impact and relate to each other.

While members may have differing institutional missions, it is sometimes recognized as an excuse to not cooperate instead of a good reason to cooperate. For the latter, the diversity of institutional missions actually make it possible for the institutions to complement each other via cooperation of some form (Johnson, 1988). In order for a consortium to succeed, board members must fully develop, comprehend, and support the mission and objectives of the consortium (Horgan, 1999). The articulation of a consortium mission is best achieved through full participation and consensus of the board and its officer/executive director at the consortium development phase (as opposed to years later). In addition, a mission should serve all of its members while not being too narrow in scope, rather, it should be broad. The GCCCU's mission statement is a good example of this. Once a mission statement is established, it may pave the way for articulation of roles and expectations within the consortium. While Konrad & Small (1986) purport that roles and expectations be documented in formal written agreements, this author suggests that these can be articulated within a board manual that outlines terms of reference, length of term, composition of committees and board, and relevant by-laws. In this way, the manual can serve as an orientation tool for new board members and as a 'reminder' or reference for existing members.

Since consortia can include diverse and large numbers of members, participation in decision-making is often a challenge. It has been argued previously that governance in higher education institutions include participation from faculty. Of course, students should also participate as they are both consumers and, in many respects, stakeholders to a certain degree. Governance in cooperative arrangements must also support participation from faculty, students, and other staff. The level of participation (i.e., from voting privileges to informal voices) may be variable. A structure that embraces a "bottom-up" communication system and acknowledges the voices of all stakeholders (including faculty, staff, and students) is true to the notion of cooperation. As such, it can improve communication and increases visibility of the consortium within member institutions (Larrance, 1999; Wolvin, 1991).

#### **Proposed Model of Governance (Appendix A)**

While this author believes that no governance structure is perfect and without its challenges, "traditional" governance models in higher education are not necessarily well suited for consortia. Instead, governance structures and processes should be reconsidered to encompass a consortium's aspects of diverse composition, effective decision-making and communication, increased participation; and self-evaluation. This proposed model is based on a Canadian consortium of heterogeneous members (colleges and universities) that offer a specific, standardized academic program.

The board should be comprised of one representative (either a dean or director, given its purpose to deliver an academic program) from each institution of the consortia. In order to balance competition as well as follow the example of community colleges, the board would also include representatives (the number of these representatives would depend on the size of the consortium; it can conceivably range from 20%-50% of its membership) from the professional community; ideally, a community representative with legal (i.e., lawyer) and financial (i.e., banker, prominent business person) experience or someone from a provincial College Compensation and Appointments Council, as in the case of Ontario. Clearly, this would assist in fiduciary responsibility. These community representatives should be appointed by a sub-committee of the board, rather than the board itself. This would ensure a more equitable approach while increasing participation from others.

Each member would have an equal vote (i.e., 1 vote per member). The chair of the board should be elected by the board itself but with a maximum term set out (i.e., max. 2 years and no more than 3 terms within a 15 year period). The board would also be responsible for appointing an executive director, however, in consultation with the sub-committee responsible for the recruitment of an executive director and community board members. Other sub-committees should be formed on the basis of need and size of the consortium. Since the consortium is formed because of an academic program, it would make sense to form a sub-committee that deals with curricular issues. Other sub-committees can include finance and public relations. Each sub-committee would include at least one faculty, one student, and one board representative. As this would be a policy type of board, the executive director, along with the sub-committees would serve as the operational arms of the board. In this way, all necessary information should be processed through the executive director for board approval through consensus first and then vote, if necessary (that is, if consensus is not achieved first). The board would evaluate itself on an annual basis; have a clear mission; terms of references; appropriate by-laws; and roles definition as outlined in their board manual.

### **Future Directions**

In general, there appears to be some outdated and insufficient literature regarding inter-institutional cooperative arrangements. In

particular, there is a lack of adequate Canadian content and literature that addresses governance in these arrangements at an in-depth level. Clearly, these gaps need to be filled. Hopefully, with greater Canadian experiences resulting in broader literature and more in-depth analysis of governance structures within various cooperative arrangements, greater best practices can be established and disseminated. Moreover, diverse and creative models of governance need to be developed so that current issues that plague these cooperative arrangements can be resolved. Given the rising popularity of cooperative arrangements in higher education, particularly with the emergence of collaborative nursing programs in Ontario, chronicling these experiences would be key to success.

### Conclusion

Although inter-institutional cooperative arrangements face many challenges, their benefits may have inspired many other higher education institutions to consider cooperating in various forms, hence, the notable popularity of these arrangements over the past decade. Despite the popularity of these arrangements, the literature remains insufficient and traditional models of governance unsuitable and not well demarcated. To this end, more research is required to facilitate the rethinking of governance structures so that new models of governance in inter-institutional cooperative arrangements can emerge.

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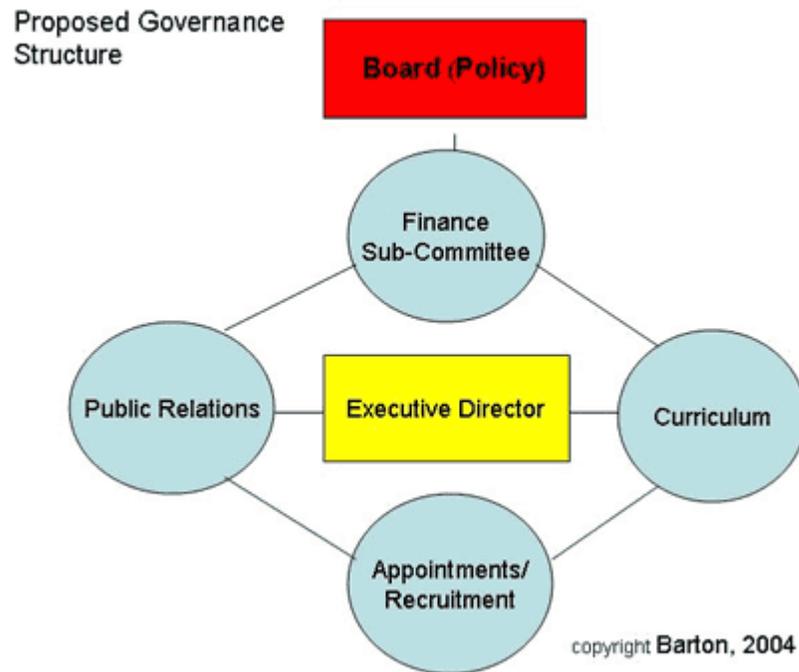
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## Appendix A



### Principles:

- Decision-making and communication of sub-committees via Executive Director to Board
- All recommendations for decisions by the board to be produced in advance with appropriate background information and a clear recommendation (this should be distributed prior to the board meeting in hard-copy or by email)
- Each sub-committee comprised of at least one faculty, one student, and one board member (who will act as chair of the sub-committee and rotating on an annual basis)
- A systematic review/ self-evaluation of the board and sub-committees to be conducted annually
- Clear mission and objectives of consortium

- Board manual will include: terms of reference, communication processes, by-laws, length of terms
- Decision making based on consensus and if still unresolved, a majority vote  
Communication processes: regular meetings (every month for board and sub-committees; use of email and audio-conferences to keep abreast of ongoing issues; development of newsletters to all stakeholders and member institutions in order to stay visible)

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