



TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate
FROM: Governance Committee
RE: Resolution: Resolution regarding the importance of maintaining effective shared governance practices during times of crisis.
DATE: 186th Plenary, October 15-17, 2020
LOCATION: Online
RESOLUTION #: 186-05-1
VOTE TALLY: For: 46 / Against: 0 / Abstain: 0

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic creates a prolonged crisis situation that is greatly affecting all aspects of society, including the way that educational institutions such as SUNY carry out their missions; and

WHEREAS this is not the first, nor is it likely to be the last, crisis to affect SUNY, such as fiscal exigencies, civil unrest, natural disasters, and public health emergencies; and

WHEREAS the current COVID-19 pandemic is the latest example of a crisis that further strains the ability to maintain effective communication, while simultaneously being a time where good communication continues to be critical to provide the support that students, faculty, and staff need; and

WHEREAS some decisions during a crisis are made by federal, state, and local entities, such as the New York State Office of the Governor, which require quick action by SUNY and local campuses; and

WHEREAS crisis situations do not negate the principles and importance of shared governance in planning, decision-making, and implementation of policies and actions; and

WHEREAS although some campuses have reported the continued use of effective shared governance practices during the current crisis, others have reported a breakdown of shared governance in areas such as faculty senate review of changing academic policies, lack of faculty involvement on emergency planning task forces, and inconsistent and insufficient communication from administration to campus constituencies; and

WHEREAS crisis situations do not necessarily occur within the confines of the academic year, or within the typical timetable under which campus governance structures operate; and

WHEREAS some campus governance bodies may lack the necessary practices or bylaws to allow for quick action in emergency situations, or outside of the typical academic calendar:

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the SUNY University Faculty Senate requests the Chancellor remind campus presidents of the importance of maintaining good shared governance practices and timely communication at all times, including during times of crisis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate requests that Campus Governance Leaders on each campus ensure that the appropriate shared governance structures and bylaws are in place to expedite shared governance work during crisis situations, within or outside of the traditional academic calendar; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate requests that Campus Governance Leaders review the attached suggestions for effective shared governance practices, and work with local governance bodies and administration to adopt those that they believe would be appropriate for their campuses.

SUGGESTIONS:

Work with local campus administration to establish faculty governance representation on local President's Cabinets, Provosts Cabinets, budget committees, or other administrative decision-making bodies, if this does not already exist. If this is established as normal practice, it will ensure continuity during an emergency situation.

Work with local campus administration to establish expectations for faculty governance representation on committees or task forces that may be created for emergencies.

Review bylaws to ensure that they allow for:

- Actions by executive committees on behalf of governance bodies between regularly scheduled meetings and during breaks in the academic calendar.
- Special meetings by governance bodies when necessary.
- Remote governance body meetings, when in-person meetings are not possible.
- Mechanisms for secure and accurate voting during remote governance body meetings. This would include elections of governance leaders.
- Clearly defined terms of office for elected governance leaders.