

## **Talk for "Shared Governance and the Modern University" panel**

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My purpose today is to give you specific examples of how shared governance works at SIUC through both our senate and our Union. I wish I could tell heartwarming stories about the productive cooperation between either body and our central administration, but those of you who have seen us in the news in recent years probably wouldn't believe me anyway. I should note, though, that our atmosphere of distrust has an unfortunately long history. We made headlines all the way back in 1974, when 104 people were laid off, and among them were 28 tenured professors. Our union--the Faculty Association--didn't come into existence for several more decades.

I became a member of the senate and a Union activist from the same motives. I am proud of SIUC as a research university with an unusually diverse student body, and a history of welcoming minorities, people with disabilities, first generation students, and veterans. I see it as paramount to protect and retain our commitment to the research mission. To my mind, our greatest strength and the best thing we offer our diverse student body is access to a committed, active research faculty. Protecting this is, to my mind, the first duty of the faculty in shared governance. And, furthermore, I believe that a Research Faculty offers an incredible resource of brilliant and committed people to the University and the Administration. I want to see that resource respected and used. My goal as a senator and as the VP of our Faculty Association is to help articulate the faculty's commitment to research and to the university itself. I believe that the faculty and the administration, despite their differences, ultimately share a wide range of interests in protecting and developing the resources and the mission of our university. I am committed to improving communication between the admin and the faculty as a whole, through both the senate and the union, even if that

entails attending up to 3 two hour meetings every week. Some of you, no doubt, have spotted the contradiction in my remarks. I confess, being on the ECs of both the Union and the Senate does present a challenge to my own personal research & publication agenda. I can only hope that our administration will soon come to see the wisdom of the faculty's vision for our university, and all these meetings will become unnecessary.

Joking aside, I want to talk to you today about two specific ongoing issues of shared governance on the SIUC campus: first, our system of tenure and promotion appeals, and second our procedures for program change and reorganization. I want to illustrate the very different, and often complementary, powers and roles of the Union & Senate regarding these issues.

The problem with making the Senate the sole resource for shared governance comes in built-in limits to the senate's power: at SIUC, the senate is ultimately advisory. The Senate can be effective at communicating with the administration, and at making direct connections, at getting people placed on committees. But the senate is always constrained by its "advisory" status. Furthermore, the senate faces two structural challenges in terms of representing the faculty in shared governance issues throughout the University. Many important decisions affecting the faculty take place at the level of the department, unit, or College. Many of these matters will eventually come to the senate--but only once the deliberations (such as they are) are completed within the unit. Hence, the senate has almost no means of insuring that the faculty most knowledgeable about, and most directly affected by changes close to home are included in the decision-making process. I noticed that in your senate's recent shared governance survey at UIUC, faculty were least happy with how things were going in their specific units.

The Union, on the other hand, can use collective bargaining to have elements of shared governance enshrined in our contract and thus given the force of law; the

Union is also able to represent faculty flexibly and effectively at all levels of the university, using the tools of 1) organizing and 2) the grievance procedure.

Our senate at SIUC has a certain degree of moral authority, and is an excellent place to develop and even implement plans of shared governance. For instance, our P & T appeals at SIUC all go to the Judicial Review Board (JRB), which is a body of the senate, and an institution that is taken seriously by faculty across campus. However, the JRB too frequently becomes an illustration of the limits of the Senate's power, in that some chancellors have made a habit of setting aside JRB decisions when they are not favorable to the administration. On the upside, this makes a pleasant illustration of the complementary nature of senate and Union. In collective bargaining, the Union has had the JRB's constitution and procedures written into the contract, including provisions that the chancellor must accord a JRB decision the same treatment as a Provost's recommendation. Furthermore, affected faculty now have, under certain conditions, the means to bring such cases to binding arbitration. In other words, the union has been able to reinforce one of the senate's pillars of shared governance and made it much harder to overturn without good cause.

There are many important shared governance issues on campus, however, that the senate is simply unable to influence effectively while they are in process. Our College of Education is currently undergoing a reorganization effort; in fact, the process was underway all of last year. The senate's official role in the process has just begun this fall, in being asked to vet the reorganization plan, which calls for several departments to be broken up and merged with others. In fact, the most substantive and detailed information the senate has received on the plan and the reorganization effort has come to it in reports from the Union.

The Union, on the other hand, has been able to influence the process before it even began, by getting an article in our contract on program changes. Furthermore, the Union has worked closely with the Faculty in the College of Ed throughout the

process. The reorganization was overseen by a new Dean, and communication about it with the faculty in the college was haphazard. The second tool the union offered--after the article on program changes in our contract--was simply organization and communication. Faculty in the college learned of the reorganization first from rumors that some Departments had held votes on which specific faculty members they would be willing to absorb if other departments were broken up. Needless to say, this caused a great deal of panic.

Responding quickly to faculty concerns, the Union arranged meetings for all faculty from the College of Education. For the first time, they were able to confer on what had actually taken place in the other departments; faculty members also started discussing their rights under the contract and coordinating efforts to make sure they had effective input into the reorganization process before it became a *fait accompli*.

Article IX of our contract, the article on program changes, specifies that the faculty in any unit affected by a program change must be given a vote on the proposed changes. Additionally, both the Faculty and the Faculty Association must be provided with the plan for change and the pertinent documentation in advance of the vote. Some of our Members, seeing that another Unit taking a vote on their future status before they had been informed of any plan was a violation of this article, and certainly of its spirit, filed grievances. Our grievance process begins with informal meetings in the hopes of ironing things out at the lowest administrative level before they become problems. This grievance process was the next tool--the third--that the Union brought to the table to ensure faculty inclusion in the process, and to try to aid communication between the faculty and the administration. The first response we got from the administration was curious. They said, in essence, to watch out. If we insisted on a plan being distributed, according to the contract, that's what we would get! I am still not sure why that was presented as a threat.

Our interest in the process was not simply to scuttle it. Some of our members were

strongly in favor of aspects of the plan. Our agenda was simply to do all we could to ensure real shared governance, to make sure the faculty, the people most affected and most knowledgeable about the structure and the possibilities of their units, were kept in the loop. Our duty is to represent the faculty, and given the way the process was unfolding, it was initially difficult to figure out what people actually knew about the plan, never mind what they thought of it.

To make a long story short, the administration did bring forward a plan and scheduled a vote on it. There were several oddities about the plan and the vote. The most striking was that the entire college was called on to participate in a single vote. This vote was to be a simple yes or no, and would combine all the possible changes into one issue, and would include Departments unaffected by the changes alongside those affected. Hence, a given faculty member could not make a distinction between the plans for her department and the plans for another. Furthermore, staff, TT faculty, and NTT faculty were all to vote together. The senate EC asked if this was quite proper; we were told simply "yes, it is." The union, however, had better luck; we appealed to the administration that the contract specifies that tenure-line faculty should hold a distinct vote, as should NTT and staff. The administration agreed, but implemented an unfortunate remedy: they numbered the ballots, so that they could sort the ballots by constituency groups after the vote was completed.

When the Union protested this in a grievance hearing, we had our best moment of cooperation with the administration. They quickly agreed that such a vote, which undermined the sanctity of the ballot, was unacceptable, and furthermore they agreed that the vote should take place unit-by-unit, with voters instructed to vote only on the aspects of the plan that affected them directly. Units that would not be affected did not vote. At this stage, the vote, plans and reports have been forwarded to the Senate for their consideration. I am confident that the Union has done well by the faculty of the College in making sure they were informed about the plan, and at chance to express themselves clearly on it. I think the Union has also aided the Senate by ensuring that

the vote, the plan and the documents forwarded to them are as revealing as they can be. Personally, I am hoping the senate will be able to use some of the flaws of this process to convince the administration to include the faculty more fully and directly in such efforts in the future.

To wrap up: in achieving the goal of genuine shared governance, faculty senates and faculty unions have distinct and yet complementary roles to play. Both bodies ultimately share many interests with the university administration. It is one of the central goals of collective bargaining to find and articulate those shared interests. But, in our experience at SIUC, it has often proved very useful to have agreements on issues of shared governance which we have reached with our administration in the past enshrined into our collective bargaining contract. Thanks.