



TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate
FROM: Executive Committee
RE: Resolution: Shared Governance in These Times of Extraordinary Challenges
DATE: 187th Plenary, January 21-23, 2021
LOCATION: Online
RESOLUTION #: 187-01-1
VOTE TALLY: For: 43 / Against: 0 / Abstain: 0

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS Standard VII of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (13th Edition, 2015) states that an institution must have “a clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision making by each constituency, including governing body, administration, faculty, staff and students”; and

WHEREAS SUNY campuses are experiencing extraordinary financial deficits due in large part to the COVID crisis; and

WHEREAS some universities across the U.S. have proposed or implemented elimination of or other changes to academic programs and other cost-cutting measures with little or no shared-governance input, often citing the need to act quickly in response to the COVID-19 crisis; and

WHEREAS United University Professions has strongly advocated for monitoring and maintaining healthy campus communities and work environments for faculty, staff, and students in the SUNY system, including proactive measures to minimize spread of the COVID-19 virus, testing requirements to monitor the health of campus communities, and processes for addressing COVID-19 positive employees and students; and

WHEREAS the process for approval of changes in academic programs is a matter of special responsibility of the faculty with guidelines typically contained in faculty bylaws; and

WHEREAS the University Faculty Senate passed Resolution 186-05-1 urging Campus Governance Leaders to ensure that appropriate structures and bylaws are in place to expedite shared governance work during crisis situations;

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the SUNY University Faculty Senate reaffirms that the principles and practices of shared governance apply equally during times of crisis and extraordinary challenges ; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the SUNY University Faculty Senate reiterates its call that all SUNY campus administrations engage in shared governance on their campuses during this extraordinarily challenging period; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the SUNY University Faculty Senate strongly recommends that administration consult with campus shared governance representatives as well as other key stakeholders when considering decisions in at least the following three priority areas:

in the area of health and safety of faculty, staff and students, the SUNY University Faculty Senate

endorses the recommendations of the UUP, commends campus administrations that follow these recommendations, and encourages all campuses to make every effort to protect the health and safety of faculty, staff, and students, and

in the area of instruction and instructional modality shifts, the SUNY University Faculty Senate recognizes the strenuous efforts required of faculty and students at this time, acknowledges the challenges of providing and supporting remote instruction, and encourages campus administrations to provide resources for successful remote instruction, and

in the area of budgetary deficits and fiscal crises resulting from COVID, the SUNY University Faculty Senate acknowledges the gravity of the financial distress confronting campuses during this crisis, and encourages collaboration across campus units on measures to creatively address financial shortfalls, ensuring that programs are maintained and the needs of faculty, staff, and students are met; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the SUNY University Faculty Senate requests that the Chancellor encourage campus presidents to engage in consultation and shared-governance practices as they pertain to important decisions impacting faculty, staff, and students.

Additional Guidance: Potential Areas for Shared Governance Involvement During Crisis Management

Health and Safety

Potential areas for consultation (samples only and not exhaustive)

- Consideration of plans to change or remove COVID testing requirements
- Consideration of plans to quarantine and feed COVID-positive students
- Consideration of plans for contact tracing and reporting
- Consideration of plans to provide resources and language to address COVID-related challenges such as mask wearing and enforcement

Instruction and Instructional Modality

Potential areas for consultation (samples only and not exhaustive)

- Consideration of academic freedom and intellectual property
- Consideration of the technology needs of faculty and students
- Consideration of instructional modality changes and requirements
- Consideration of professional development and support of faculty in designing, developing, and delivering courses

Budgetary Deficits and Crises

Potential areas for consultation (samples only and not exhaustive)

- Consideration of plans to combine or otherwise consolidate schools, departments, and individual programs
- Consideration of plans to deactivate or retrench units or individual programs
- Consideration of plans to encourage retirement
- Consideration of plans to eliminate vacant positions
- Consideration of plans to change educational technologies

i. <https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/boardoftrustees/SUNY-BOT-Policies-Jan2019.pdf>

ii. <https://www.suny.edu/about/shared-governance/>